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THE

WORKS

OF

HANNAH MORE.

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A NEW EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS,

IN ELEVEN VOLUMES.

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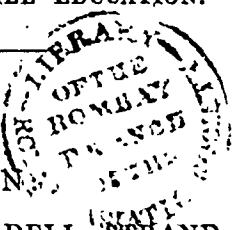
VOL. V.

STRICTURES ON FEMALE EDUCATION.



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STRICTURES

ON THE

MODERN SYSTEM

OF

FEMALE EDUCATION;

WITH

A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT PREVALENT AMONG WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE.

May you so raise your character, that you may help to make the next age a better thing, and leave posterity in your debt for the advantage it shall receive by your example! — LORD HALIFAX.

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has surviv'd the Fall!
Thou art not known where PLEASURE is ador'd,
That reeling Goddess with the zoneless waist:
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown! COWPER.

The Hope and Expectation of the Time
Should not so lavish of their presence be,
Nor so enfeoff'd to Popularity,
That being nightly swallow'd by Men's eyes,
They're surfeited with honey, and begin
To loathe the taste of sweetness. SHAKSPEARE.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIFTH VOLUME.

Page

INTRODUCTION..... ix

CHAP. I.

Address to women of rank and fortune, on the effects of their influence on society. — Suggestions for the exertion of it in various instances. 1

CHAP. II.

On the education of women. — The prevailing system tends to establish the errors which it ought to correct. — Dangers arising from an excessive cultivation of the arts..... 43

CHAP. III.

External improvement. — Children's balls. — French governesses..... 60

CHAP. IV.

Comparison of the mode of female education in the last age with the present. 70

Page

CHAP. V.

On the religious employment of time. — On the manner in which holidays are passed. — Self-ishness and inconsideration considered. — Dangers arising from the world..... 80

CHAP. VI.

ON THE EARLY FORMING OF HABITS.

On the necessity of forming the judgment to direct those habits..... 98

CHAP. VII.

Filial obedience not the character of the age. — A comparison with the preceding age in this respect. — Those who cultivate the mind advised to study the nature of the soil. — Unpromising children often make strong characters. — Teachers too apt to devote their pains almost exclusively to children of parts..... 109

CHAP. VIII.

On female study, and initiation into knowledge. — Error of cultivating the imagination to the neglect of the judgment. — Books of reasoning recommended..... 126

CHAP. IX.

On the religious and moral use of history and geography..... 142

CHAP. X.

On the use of definitions, and the moral benefits of accuracy in language..... 158

Page

CHAP. XI.

On religion. — The necessity and duty of early instruction shown by analogy with human learning..... 166

CHAP. XII.

On the manner of instructing young persons in religion. — General remarks on the genius of Christianity..... 181

CHAP. XIII.

Hints suggested for furnishing young persons with a scheme of prayer..... 204

CHAP. XIV.

The practical use of female knowledge, with a sketch of the female character, and a comparative view of the sexes..... 216

CHAP. XV.

CONVERSATION. — Hints suggested on the subject. — On the tempers and dispositions to be introduced in it. — Errors to be avoided. — Vanity under various shapes the cause of those errors..... 245

CHAP. XVI.

On the danger of an ill-directed sensibility..... 283

CHAP. XVII.

On dissipation, and the modern habits of fashionable life..... 309

Page

CHAP. XVIII.

On public amusements..... 341

CHAP. XIX.

A worldly spirit incompatible with the spirit of Christianity..... 360

CHAP. XX.

On the leading doctrines of Christianity. — The corruption of human nature. — The doctrine of redemption. — The necessity of a change of heart, and of the Divine influences to produce that change. — With a sketch of the Christian character..... 387

CHAP. XXI.

On the duty and efficacy of prayer..... 420

INTRODUCTION.

It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a very defective education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct; — to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless. Is it not unreasonable and unjust, to express disappointment if our daughters should, in their subsequent lives, turn out precisely that very kind of character for which it would be evident to an unprejudiced by-stander that the whole scope and tenour of their instruction had been systematically preparing them?

Some reflections on the present erroneous system are here with great deference submitted to public consideration. The author is apprehensive that she shall be accused of betraying the interests of her sex by laying open their defects; but surely an earnest wish to turn their attention to objects calculated to promote their true dignity, is not the office of an enemy. So to expose the weakness of the land, as to suggest the necessity of internal

improvement, and to point out the means of effectual defence, is not treachery, but patriotism.

Again, it may be objected to this little work, that many errors are here ascribed to women which by no means belong to them *exclusively*, and that it seems to confine to the sex those faults which are common to the species: but this is in some measure unavoidable. In speaking on the qualities of one sex, the moralist is somewhat in the situation of the Geographer, who is treating on the nature of one country: — the air, soil, and produce of the land which he is describing, cannot fail in many essential points to resemble those of other countries under the same parallel; yet it is his business to descant on the one without adverting to the other; and though in drawing his map he may happen to introduce some of the neighbouring coast, yet his principal attention must be confined to that country which he proposes to describe, without taking into account the resembling circumstances of the adjacent shores.

It may be also objected, that the opinion here suggested on the state of manners among the higher classes of our countrywomen, may seem to controvert the just encomiums of modern travellers, who generally concur in ascribing a decided superiority to the ladies of this country over those of every other. But such is, in general, the state of foreign manners, that the comparative praise is almost an injury to *English* women. To be flattered for excelling those whose standard of excellence is very low, is but a degrading kind of

commendation; for the value of all praise derived from superiority, depends on the worth of the competitor. The character of British ladies, with all the unparalleled advantages they possess, must never be determined by a comparison with the women of other nations, but by comparing them with what they themselves might be if all their talents and unrivalled opportunities were turned to the best account.

Again, it may be said, that the author is less disposed to expatiate on excellence than error; but the office of the historian of human manners is delineation rather than panegyric. Were the end in view eulogium, and not improvement, eulogium would have been far more gratifying, nor would just objects for praise have been difficult to find. Even in her own limited sphere of observation, the author is acquainted with much excellence in the class of which she treats; with women who, possessing learning which would be thought extensive in the other sex, set an example of deep humility to their own; — women who, distinguished for wit and genius, are eminent for domestic qualities; — who, excelling in the fine arts, have carefully enriched their understandings; — who, enjoying great affluence, devote it to the glory of God; — who, possessing elevated rank, think their noblest style and title is that of a Christian.

That there is also much worth which is little known, she is persuaded; for it is the modest nature of goodness to exert itself quietly, while a few characters of the opposite cast seem, by the

rumour of their exploits, to fill the world; and by their noise to multiply their numbers. It often happens that a very small party of people, by occupying the fore-ground, by seizing the public attention, and monopolising the public talk, contrives to appear to be the great body; a few active spirits, provided their activity take the wrong turn, and support the wrong cause, seem to fill the scene; and a few disturbers of order, who have the talent of thus exciting a false idea of their multitudes by their mischiefs, actually gain strength, and swell their numbers, by this fallacious arithmetic.

But the present work is no more intended for a panegyric on those purer characters who seek not human praise because they act from a higher motive, than for a satire on the avowedly licentious, who, urged by the impulse of the moment, resist no inclination; and, led away by the love of fashion, dislike no censure, so it may serve to rescue them from neglect or oblivion.

There are, however, multitudes of the young and the well-disposed, who have as yet taken no decided part, who are just launching on the ocean of life, just about to lose their own right convictions, virtually preparing to counteract their better propensities, and unreluctantly yielding themselves to be carried down the tide of popular practices; sanguine, thoughtless, and confident of safety. — To these the author would gently hint, that, when once embarked, it will be no longer easy to say to their passions, or even to their principles, "Thus far shall ye go, and no further." Their struggles

will grow fainter, their resistance will become feebler, till, borne down by the confluence of example, temptation, appetite, and habit, resistance and opposition will soon be the only things of which they will learn to be ashamed.

Should any reader revolt at what is conceived to be unwarranted strictness in this little book, let it not be thrown by in disgust before the following short consideration be weighed. —— If in this Christian country we are actually beginning to regard the solemn office of baptism as merely furnishing an article to the parish register; — if we are learning from our indefatigable teachers, to consider this Christian rite as a legal ceremony retained for the sole purpose of recording the *age* of our children; — then, indeed, the prevailing system of education and manners on which these volumes presume to animadvert, may be adopted with propriety, and persisted in with safety, without entailing on our children or on ourselves the peril of broken promises, or the guilt of violated vows. — But if the obligation which Christian baptism imposes be really binding; — if the ordinance have, indeed, a meaning beyond a mere secular transaction, beyond a record of names and dates; — if it be an institution by which the child is solemnly devoted to God as his Father, to Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier; — if there be no definite period assigned when the obligation of fulfilling the duties it enjoins shall be superseded; — if, having once dedicated our offspring to their Crea-

tor, we no longer dare to mock him by bringing them up in ignorance of His will and neglect of His laws; — if, after having enlisted them under the banners of Christ to fight manfully against the three great enemies of mankind, we are no longer at liberty to let them lay down their arms; much less to lead them to act as if they were in alliance instead of hostility with these enemies; — if, after having promised that they shall renounce the vanities of the world, we are not allowed to invalidate the engagement; — if, after such a covenant, we should tremble to make these renounced vanities the supreme object of our own pursuit or of *their* instruction; — if all this be really so, then the Strictures on Modern Education in the first of these volumes, and on the Habits of polished Life in the second, will not be found so repugnant to truth, and reason, and common sense, as may on a first view be supposed.

But if, on candidly summing up the evidence, the design and scope of the author be fairly judged, not by the customs or opinions of the worldly, (for every English subject has a right to object to a suspected or prejudiced jury,) but by an appeal to that divine law which is the only infallible rule of judgment; if, on such an appeal, her views and principles shall be found censurable for their rigour, absurd in their requisitions, or preposterous in their restrictions, she will have no right to complain of such a verdict, because she will then stand condemned by that court to whose decision she implicitly submits.

Let it not be suspected that the author arrogantly conceives *herself* to be exempt from that natural corruption of the heart which it is one chief object of this slight work to exhibit; that she superciliously erects herself into the impeccable censor of her sex and of the world; as if from the critic's chair she were coldly pointing out the faults and errors of another order of beings, in whose welfare she had not that lively interest which can only flow from the tender and intimate participation of fellow-feeling.

With a deep self-abasement, arising from a strong conviction of being, indeed, a partaker in the same corrupt nature; together with a full persuasion of the many and great defects of these volumes, and a sincere consciousness of her inability to do justice to a subject which, however, a sense of duty impelled her to undertake; she commits herself to the candour of that Public which has so frequently, in her instance, accepted a right intention as a substitute for a powerful performance.

BATH,
March 14. 1799.

STRICTURES

ON THE

MODERN SYSTEM

OF

FEMALE EDUCATION.

CHAP. I.

ADDRESS TO WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE, ON THE EFFECTS OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY. — SUGGESTIONS FOR THE EXERTION OF IT IN VARIOUS INSTANCES.

AMONG the talents for the application of which women of the higher class will be peculiarly accountable, there is one, the importance of which they can scarcely rate too highly. This talent is INFLUENCE. We read of the greatest orator of antiquity, that the wisest plans which it had cost him years to frame, a woman could overturn in a single day; and when we consider the variety of mischiefs which an ill-directed influence has been known to produce, we are led to reflect with the

most sanguine hope on the beneficial effects to be expected from the same powerful force when exerted in its true direction.

The general state of civilised society depends more than those are aware who are not accustomed to scrutinise into the springs of human action, on the prevailing sentiments and habits of women, and on the nature and degree of the estimation in which they are held. Even those who admit the power of female elegance on the manners of men, do not always attend to the influence of female principles on their character. In the former case, indeed, women are apt to be sufficiently conscious of their power, and not backward in turning it to account. But there are nobler objects to be effected by the exertion of their powers, and, unfortunately, ladies, who are often unreasonably confident where they ought to be diffident, are sometimes capriciously diffident just when they ought to feel where their true importance lies; and, feeling, to exert it. To use their boasted power over mankind to no higher purpose than the gratification of vanity or the indulgence of pleasure, is the degrading triumph of those fair victims to luxury, caprice, and despotism, whom the laws and the religion of the voluptuous prophet of Arabia exclude from light, and liberty, and knowledge; and it is humbling to reflect, that in those countries in which fondness for the mere persons of women is carried to the highest excess, *they are slaves;* and that their moral and intellectual degradation increases in

direct proportion to the adoration which is paid to mere external charms.

But I turn to the bright reverse of this mortifying scene; to a country where our sex enjoys the blessings of liberal instruction, of reasonable laws, of a pure religion, and all the endearing pleasures of an equal, social, virtuous, and delightful intercourse: I turn with an earnest hope, that women, thus richly endowed with the bounties of Providence, will not content themselves with polishing, when they are able to reform; with entertaining, when they may awaken; and with captivating for a day, when they may bring into action powers of which the effects may be commensurate with eternity.

In this moment of alarm and peril*, I would call on them with a "warning voice," which should stir up every latent principle in their minds, and kindle every slumbering energy in their hearts: I would call on them to come forward, and contribute their full and fair proportion towards the saving of their country. But I would call on them to come forward, without departing from the refinement of their character, without derogating from the dignity of their rank, without blemishing the delicacy of their sex: I would call them to the best and most appropriate exertion of their power — to raise the depressed tone of public morals, and to awaken the drowsy spirit of religious principle. They know too well how arbitrarily they give the law to manners, and with how despotic a

* Written early in the French Revolution.

sway they fix the standard of fashion. But this is not enough; this is a low mark, a prize not worthy of their high and holy calling. For, on the use which women of the superior class may now be disposed to make of that power delegated to them by the courtesy of custom, by the honest gallantry of the heart, by the imperious control of virtuous affections, by the habits of civilised states, by the usages of polished society; — on the use, I say, which they shall hereafter make of this influence, will depend, in no low degree, the well-being of those states, and the virtue and happiness, nay, perhaps, the very existence, of that society.

At this period, when our country can only hope to stand by opposing a bold and noble *unanimity* to the most tremendous confederacies against religion, and order, and governments, which the world ever saw; what an accession would it bring to the public strength, could we prevail on beauty, and rank, and talents, and virtue, confederating their several powers, to exert themselves, with a patriotism at once firm and feminine, for the general good! I am not sounding an alarm to female warriors, or exciting to debate female politicians: I hardly know which of the two is the most disgusting and unnatural character. Propriety is to a woman what the great Roman critic says action is to an orator; it is the first, the second, the third requisite. A woman may be knowing, active, witty, and amusing; but without propriety she cannot be amiable. Propriety is the centre in which all the lines of duty and of agree-

ableness meet. It is to character what proportion is to figure, and grace to attitude. It does not depend on any one perfection, but it is the result of general excellence. It shows itself by a regular, orderly, undeviating course; and never starts from its sober orbit into any splendid eccentricities; for it would be ashamed of such praise as it might extort by any deviations from its proper path. It renounces all commendation but what is characteristic; and I would make it the criterion of true taste, right principle, and genuine feeling, in a woman, whether she would be less touched with all the flattery of romantic and exaggerated panegyric, than with that beautiful picture of correct and elegant propriety which Milton draws of our first mother, when he delineates

> " Those thousand *decencies* which daily flow
> From all her words and actions."

Even the influence of religion is to be exercised with discretion. A female polemic wanders nearly as far from the limits prescribed to her sex, as a female Machiavel or warlike Thalestris. Fierceness has made almost as few converts as the sword, and both are peculiarly ungraceful in a female. Even *religious* violence has human tempers of its own to indulge, and is gratifying itself when it would be thought to be serving God. Let not the bigot place her natural passions to the account of Christianity, or imagine shē is pious when she is only passionate. Let her bear in mind that a Christian doctrine is always to be

defended with a Christian spirit, and not make herself amends by the stoutness of her orthodoxy for the badness of her temper. Many, because they defend a religious opinion with pertinacity, seem to fancy that they thereby acquire a kind of right to withhold the meekness and obedience which should be necessarily involved in the principle.

But the character of a consistent Christian is as carefully to be maintained as that of a fiery disputant is to be avoided; and she who is afraid to avow her principles, or ashamed to defend them, has little claim to that honourable title. A profligate, who laughs at the most sacred institutions, and keeps out of the way of every thing which comes under the appearance of formal instruction, may be disconcerted by the modest, but spirited rebuke of a delicate woman, whose life adorns the doctrines which her conversation defends; while she who administers reproof with ill-breeding, defeats the effect of her remedy. On the other hand, there is a dishonest way of labouring to conciliate the favour of a whole company, though of characters and principles irreconcilably opposite. The words may be so guarded as not to shock the believer, while the eye and voice may be so accommodated, as not to discourage the infidel. She who, with a half-earnestness, trims between the truth and the fashion; who, while she thinks it creditable to defend the cause of religion, yet does it in a faint tone, a studied ambiguity of phrase, and a certain expression in her coun-

tenance, which proves that she is not displeased with what she affects to censure, or that she is afraid to lose her reputation for wit, in proportion as she advances her credit for piety, injures the cause more than he who attacked it; for she proves, either that she does not believe what she professes, or that she does not reverence what fear compels her to believe. But this is not all: she is called on, not barely to repress impiety, but to excite, to encourage, and to cherish every tendency to serious religion.

Some of the occasions of contributing to the general good which are daily presenting themselves to ladies are almost too minute to be pointed out. Yet of the good which right-minded women, anxiously watching these minute occasions, and adroitly seizing them, might accomplish, we may form some idea by the ill effects which we actually see produced, through the mere levity, carelessness, and inattention (to say no worse), of some of those ladies who are looked up to as standards in the fashionable world.

I am persuaded, if many a woman of fashion, who is now disseminating unintended mischief, under the dangerous notion that there is no harm in any thing short of positive vice, and under the false colours of that indolent humility, "What good can *I* do?" could be brought to see in its collected force the annual aggregate of the random evil she is daily doing, by constantly throwing a *little* casual weight into the wrong scale, by mere inconsiderate and unguarded chat, she would start

from her self-complacent dream. If she could conceive how much she may be diminishing the good impressions of *young* men; and if she could imagine how little amiable levity or irreligion makes her appear in the eyes of those who are older and abler, however loose their own principles may be, she would correct herself in the first instance, from pure good nature; and in the second, from worldly prudence and mere self-love. But on how much higher principles would she restrain herself, if she habitually took into account the important doctrine of consequences; and if she reflected that the minor, but more habitual, corruptions make up by their number what they may seem to come short of by their weight; then, perhaps, she would find that, among the higher class of women, *inconsideration* is adding more to the daily quantity of evil than almost all other causes put together.

There is an instrument of inconceivable force, when it is employed against the interests of Christianity: it is not reasoning, for that may be answered; it is not learning, for luckily the infidel is not seldom ignorant; it is not invective, for we leave so coarse an engine to the hands of the vulgar; it is not evidence, for, happily, we have that all on our side; it is RIDICULE, the most deadly weapon in the whole arsenal of impiety, and which becomes an almost unerring shaft when directed by a fair and fashionable hand. No maxim has been more readily adopted, or is more intrinsically false, than that which the fascinating

eloquence of a noble sceptic of the last age contrived to render so popular, that "ridicule is the test of truth."* It is no test of truth itself; but of their firmness who assert the cause of truth, it is, indeed, a severe test. This light, keen, missile weapon, the irresolute, unconfirmed Christian will find it harder to withstand than the whole heavy artillery of infidelity united.

A young man of the better sort, has, perhaps, just entered upon the world, with a certain share of good dispositions and right feelings; neither ignorant of the evidences nor destitute of the principles of Christianity, without parting with his respect for religion, he sets out with the too natural wish of making himself a reputation, and of standing well with the fashionable part of the female world. He preserves for a time a horror of vice, which makes it not difficult for him to resist the grosser corruptions of society; he can as yet repel profaneness; nay, he can withstand the banter of a club. He has sense enough to see through the miserable fallacies of the new philosophy, and spirit enough to expose its malignity. So far he does well, and you are ready to congratulate him on his security. You are mistaken: the principles of the ardent and hitherto promising adventurer are shaken, just in that very society where, while he was looking for pleasure, he doubted not of safety. In the company of certain women of good fashion and no ill fame he makes shipwreck of his religion. He sees them treat with levity or

* Lord Shaftesbury.

derision subjects which he has been used to hear named with respect. He could confute an argument, he could unravel a sophistry; but he cannot stand a laugh. A sneer, not at the truth of religion, for that, perhaps, is by none of the party disbelieved, but at its gravity, its unseasonableness, its dulness, puts all his resolution to flight. He feels his mistake, and struggles to recover his credit; in order to which, he adopts the gay affectation of trying to seem worse than he really is: he goes on to say things which he does not believe, and to deny things which he does believe; and all to efface the first impression, and to recover a reputation which he has committed to *their* hands, by whose report he knows he shall stand or fall, in those circles in which he is ambitious to shine.

That cold compound of irony, irreligion, selfishness, and sneer, which make up what the French (from whom we borrow the thing as well as the word) so well express by the term *persiflage*, has of late years made an incredible progress in blasting the opening buds of piety in young persons of fashion. A cold pleasantry, a temporary cant word, the jargon of the day (for the "great vulgar" have their jargon), blights the first promise of seriousness. The ladies of *ton* have certain watchwords, which may be detected as indications of this spirit. The clergy are spoken of under the contemptuous appellation of *The Parsons*. Some ludicrous association is infallibly combined with every idea of religion. If a warm-hearted youth

has ventured to name with enthusiasm some eminently pious character, his glowing ardour is extinguished with a laugh; and a drawling declaration, that the person in question is really a mighty *harmless* good creature, is uttered in a tone which leads the youth secretly to vow, that whatever else he may be, he will never be a good harmless creature.

Nor is ridicule more dangerous to true piety than to true taste. An age which values itself on parody, burlesque, irony, and caricature, produces little that is sublime, either in genius or in virtue; but they *amuse*, and we live in an age which *must* be amused, though genius, feeling, truth, and principle, be the sacrifice. Nothing chills the ardours of devotion like a frigid sarcasm; and, in the season of youth, the mind should be kept particularly clear of all light associations. This is of so much importance, that I have known persons who, having been early accustomed to certain ludicrous combinations, were never able to get their minds cleansed from the impurities contracted by this habitual levity, even after a thorough reformation in their hearts and lives had taken place: their principles became reformed, but their imaginations were indelibly soiled. They could desist from sins which the strictness of Christianity would not allow them to commit, but they could not dismiss from their minds images, which her purity forbade them to entertain.

There was a time when a variety of epithets were thought necessary to express various kinds

of excellence, and when the different qualities of the mind were distinguished by appropriate and discriminating terms; when the words venerable, learned, sagacious, profound, acute, pious, worthy, ingenious, valuable, elegant, agreeable, wise, or witty, were used as specific marks of distinct characters. But the legislators of fashion have of late years thought proper to comprise all merit in one established epithet; an epithet which, it must be confessed, is a very desirable one as far as it goes. This term is exclusively and indiscriminately applied wherever commendation is intended. The word *pleasant* now serves to combine and express all moral and intellectual excellence. Every individual, from the gravest professors of the gravest profession, down to the trifler who is of no profession at all, must earn the epithet of *pleasant*, or must be contented to be nothing, but must be consigned over to ridicule, under the vulgar and inexpressive cant word of a *bore*. This is the mortifying designation of many a respectable man, who, though of much worth and much ability, cannot perhaps clearly make out his letters patent to the title of *pleasant*. For, according to this modern classification, there is no intermediate state, but all are comprised within the ample bounds of one or other of these two comprehensive terms.

We ought to be more on our guard against this spirit of ridicule; because whatever may be the character of the present day, its faults do not spring from the redundancies of great qualities, or the overflowings of extravagant virtues. It is well

if more correct views of life, a more regular administration of laws, and a more settled state of society, have helped to restrain the excesses of the heroic ages, when love and war were considered as the great and sole business of human life. Yet if that period was marked by a romantic extravagance, and the present is distinguished by an indolent selfishness, our superiority is not so triumphantly decisive, as, in the vanity of our hearts, we may be ready to imagine.

I do not wish to bring back the frantic reign of chivalry, nor to reinstate women in that fantastic empire in which they then sat enthroned in the hearts, or, rather, in the imaginations of men. Common sense is an excellent material of universal application, which the sagacity of latter ages has seized upon, and rationally applied to the business of common life. But let us not forget, in the insolence of acknowledged superiority, that it was *religion* and *chastity* operating on the romantic spirit of those times, which established the despotic sway of woman; and though, in this altered scene of things, she now no longer looks down on her adoring votaries from the pedestal to which an absurd idolatry had lifted her, yet let her remember, that it is the same religion and the same chastity which once raised her to such an elevation that must still furnish the noblest energies of her character, must still attract the admiration, still retain the respect of the other sex.

While we lawfully ridicule the absurdities which we have abandoned, let us not plume ourselves on

that spirit of novelty which glories in the opposite extreme. If the manners of the period in question were affected, and if the gallantry was unnatural, yet the tone of virtue was high; and let us remember that constancy, purity, and honour, are not ridiculous in themselves, though they may unluckily be associated with qualities which are so; and women of delicacy would do well to reflect, when descanting on those exploded manners, how far it be decorous to deride with too broad a laugh attachments which could subsist on remote gratifications; or grossly to ridicule the taste which led the admirer to sacrifice pleasure to respect, and inclination to honour; how far it be delicate to sneer at that purity which made self-denial a proof of affection; to call in question the sound understanding of him who preferred the fame of his mistress to his own indulgence; to burlesque that antiquated refinement which considered dignity and reserve in women as additional titles to affection and reverence.

We cannot but be struck with the wonderful contrast exhibited to our view, when we contemplate the opposite manners of the two periods in question. In the former, all the flower of Europe smit with a delirious gallantry; all that was young, and noble, and brave, and great, with a fanatic frenzy, and preposterous contempt of danger, traversed seas, and scaled mountains, and compassed a large portion of the globe, at the expense of ease, and fortune, and life, for the unprofitable project of rescuing, by force of arms, from the hands of in-

fidels, the sepulchre of that Saviour, whom, *in the later period*, their posterity would think it the height of fanaticism so much as to name in good company; that Saviour, whose altars they desert, whose temples they neglect; and though in more than one country, at least, they still call themselves by his name, yet too many, it is to be feared, contemn his precepts, still more are ashamed of his doctrines, and not a few reject his sacrifice. Too many consider Christianity rather as a political than a religious distinction; too many claim the appellation of Christians, in mere opposition to that democracy with which they conceive infidelity to be associated, rather than from an abhorrence of impiety for its own sake; too many deprecate the charge of irreligion, as the supposed badge of a reprobated party, more than on account of that moral corruption which is its inseparable concomitant.

On the other hand, in an age when inversion is the character of the day, the modern idea of improvement does not consist in altering, but extirpating. We do not reform, but subvert. We do not correct old systems, but demolish them; fancying that when every thing shall be new it will be perfect. Not to have been wrong, but to have been at all, is the crime. Existence is sin. Excellence is no longer considered as an experimental thing which is to grow gradually out of observation and practice, and to be improved by the accumulating additions brought by the wisdom of successive ages. *Our wisdom* is not a creature slowly

brought, by ripening time and gradual growth, to perfection, but is an instantaneously-created goddess, which starts at once, full grown, mature, armed *cap-à-pee*, from the heads of our modern thunderers: or rather, if I may change the illusion, a perfect system is *now* expected inevitably to spring spontaneously at once, like the fabled bird of Arabia, from the ashes of its parent; and, like that, can receive its birth no other way but by the destruction of its predecessor.

Instead of clearing away what is redundant, pruning what is cumbersome, supplying what is defective, and amending what is wrong, we adopt the indefinite rage for radical reform of Jack, who, in altering Lord Peter's * coat, showed his zeal by crying out, "Tear away, brother Martin, for the love of heaven; never mind, so you do but tear away."

This tearing system has unquestionably rent away some valuable parts of that strong, rich, native stuff, which formed the ancient texture of British manners. That we have gained much, I am persuaded; that we have lost nothing, I dare not therefore affirm. But though it fairly exhibits a mark of our improved judgment to ridicule the fantastic notions of love and honour in the heroic ages, let us not rejoice that the spirit of generosity in sentiment, and of ardour in piety, the exuberances of which were then so inconvenient, are now sunk as unreasonably low. That revolution of taste and manners which the unparalleled wit and

* Swift's "Tale of a Tub."

genius of Don Quixote so happily effected throughout all the polished countries of Europe, by abolishing extravagances the most absurd and pernicious, was so far imperfect, that some virtues which he never meant to expose, unjustly fell into disrepute with the absurdities which he did; and it is become the turn of the present taste inseparably to attach in no small degree that which is ridiculous to that which is serious and heroic. Some modern works of wit have assisted in bringing piety and some of the noblest virtues into contempt, by studiously associating them with oddity, childish simplicity, and ignorance of the world; and unnecessary pains have been taken to extinguish that zeal and ardour, which, however liable to excess and error, are yet the spring of whatever is great and excellent in the human character. The novel of Cervantes is incomparable; the Tartuffe of Moliere is unequalled; but true generosity and true religion will never lose any thing of their intrinsic value, because knight-errantry and hypocrisy are legitimate objects for satire.

But to return from this too long digression to the subject of female influence. Those who have not watched the united operation of vanity and feeling on a youthful mind will not conceive how much less formidable the ridicule of all his own sex will be to a very young man, than that of those women to whom he has been taught to look up as the arbiters of elegance. Such a youth, I doubt not, might be able to work himself up, by the force of genuine Christian principle, to such a pitch of

true heroism as to refuse a challenge (and it requires more real courage to refuse a challenge than to accept one), who would yet be in danger of relapsing into the dreadful pusillanimity of the world, when he is told that no woman of fashion will hereafter look on him but with contempt. While we have cleared away the rubbish of the Gothic ages, it were to be wished we had not retained the most criminal of all their institutions. Why chivalry should indicate a madman, while its leading object, the *single combat*, should designate a gentleman, has not yet been explained. Nay, the plausible original motive is lost, while the sinful practice is continued; for the fighter of the duel no longer *pretends* to be a glorious redresser of the wrongs of strangers; no longer considers himself as piously appealing to Heaven for the justice of his cause; but, from the slavish fear of unmerited reproach, often selfishly hazards the happiness of his nearest connections, and always comes forth in direct defiance of an acknowledged command of the Almighty. Perhaps there are few occasions on which female influence might be exerted to a higher purpose than on this, in which laws and conscience have hitherto effected so little. But while the duellist, who perhaps becomes a duellist only because he was first a seducer, is welcomed with smiles, the more hardy dignified youth, who, not because he fears man but God, declines a challenge, who is resolved to brave disgrace rather than commit sin, would be treated with cool contempt by those very persons to whose esteem

he might reasonably have looked, as one of the rewards of his true and substantial fortitude.

How, then, is it to be reconciled with the decisions of principle, that delicate women should receive with complacency the successful libertine, who has been detected by the wretched father or the injured husband in a criminal commerce, the discovery of which has too justly banished the unhappy partner of his crime from virtuous society? Nay, if he happens to be very handsome, or very brave, or very fashionable, is there not sometimes a kind of dishonourable competition for his favour? Is there not a sort of bad popularity attached to his attentions? But, whether his flattering reception be derived from birth, or parts, or person, or, what is often a substitute for all, from his having made his way, by whatever means, into *good company*, women of distinction sully the sanctity of virtue by the too visible pleasure they sometimes express at the attentions of such a popular libertine, whose voluble small-talk they admire, whose sprightly nothings they quote, whose vices they justify or extenuate, and whom, perhaps, their very favour tends to prevent from becoming a better character, because he finds himself more acceptable as he is.

May I be allowed to introduce a new part of my subject, by remarking that it is a matter of inconceivable importance, though not perhaps sufficiently considered, when any popular work, not on a religious topic, but on any common subject, such as politics, history, or science, has happened

to be written by an author of sound Christian principles? It may not have been necessary, nor prudently practicable, to have made a single page in the whole work professedly religious; but still, when the living principle informs the mind of the writer, it is almost impossible but that something of its spirit will diffuse itself even into subjects with which it should seem but remotely connected. It is at least a comfort to the reader to feel that honest confidence which results from knowing that he has put himself into safe hands; that he has committed himself to an author whose known principles are a pledge that his reader need not be driven to watch himself at every step with anxious circumspection; that he need not be looking on the right hand and on the left, as if he knew there were pitfalls under the flowers which are delighting him. And it is no small point gained, that even on subjects in which you do not look to *improve* your religion, it is at least secured from deterioration. If the Athenian laws were so delicate that they disgraced any one who showed an enquiring traveller the wrong road, what disgrace, among Christians, should attach to that author, who, when a youth is enquiring the road to history or philosophy, directs him to blasphemy and unbelief? *

* The author has often heard it mentioned as matter of regret, that Mr. Gibbon should have blemished his elegant history with the two notoriously offensive chapters against Christianity. But does not this regret seem to imply that the work would, by this omission, have been left safe and unex-

In animadverting farther on the reigning evils which the times more imperatively demand that women of rank and influence should repress, Christianity calls upon them to bear their decided testimony against every thing which is notoriously contributing to the public corruption. It calls upon them to banish from their dressing-rooms (and, oh! that their influence could banish from the libraries of their sons and husbands) that sober and unsuspected mass of mischief, which, by assuming the plausible names of Science, of Philosophy, of Arts, of Belles Lettres, is gradually administering death to the principles of those who would have been on their guard, had the poison been labelled with its own pernicious title. Avowed attacks upon Revelation are more easily resisted, because the malignity is advertised; but who suspects the destruction which lurks under the harmless or instructive names of *General History*, *Natural History*, *Travels*, *Voyages*, *Lives*, *Encyclopedias*,

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ceptionable? May we not rather consider these chapters as a fatal rock indeed; but as a rock enlightened by a beacon, fairly and unequivocally warning us of the surrounding perils? To change the metaphor — Had not the mischiefs of these chapters been rendered thus conspicuous, the incautious reader would have been still left exposed to the fatal effects of the more disguised poison which is infused through almost every part of the volumes. Is it not obvious that a spirit so virulent against revealed religion as these two chapters indicate would be incessantly pouring out some of its infectious matter on every occasion; and would even industriously make the opportunities which it did not find?

Criticism, and *Romance?* Who will deny that many of these works contain much admirable matter, brilliant passages, important facts, just descriptions, faithful pictures of nature, and valuable illustrations of science? But while "the dead fly lies at the bottom," the whole will exhale a corrupt and pestilential stench.

Novels, which chiefly used to be dangerous in one respect, are now become mischievous in a thousand. They are continually shifting their ground, and enlarging their sphere, and are daily becoming vehicles of wider mischief. Sometimes they concentrate their forces, and are at once employed to diffuse destructive politics, deplorable profligacy, and impudent infidelity. Rousseau was the first popular dispenser of this complicated drug, in which the deleterious infusion was strong, and the effect proportionably fatal. For he does not attempt to seduce the affections but through the medium of the principles. He does not paint an innocent woman ruined, repenting, and restored; but, with a far more mischievous refinement, he annihilates the value of chastity, and, with pernicious subtlety, attempts to make his heroine appear almost more amiable without it. He exhibits a virtuous woman, the victim, not of temptation, but of reason,—not of vice, but of sentiment,—not of passion, but of conviction; and strikes at the very root of honour, by elevating a crime into a principle. With a metaphysical sophistry the most plausible, he debauches the heart of woman, by cherishing her vanity in the erection of a sys-

tem of male virtues, to which, with a lofty derelic-tion of those that are her more peculiar and characteristic praise, he tempts her to aspire; powerfully insinuating, that to this splendid system chastity does not necessarily belong; thus cor-rupting the judgment, and bewildering the under-standing, as the most effectual way to inflame the imagination and deprave the heart.

The rare mischief of this author consists in his power of seducing by falsehood those who love truth, but whose minds are still wavering, and whose principles are not yet formed. He allures the warm-hearted to embrace vice, not because they prefer vice, but because he gives to vice so natural an air of virtue; and ardent and enthu-siastic youth, too confidently trusting in their integrity and in their teacher, will be undone, while they fancy they are indulging in the noblest feel-ings of their nature. Many authors will more infallibly complete the ruin of the loose and ill-disposed: but perhaps there never was a net of such exquisite art, and inextricable workmanship, spread to entangle innocence, and ensnare inex-perience, as the writings of Rousseau; and, un-happily, the victim does not even struggle in the toils, because part of the delusion consists in his imagining that he is set at liberty.

Some of our recent popular publications have adopted and enlarged all the mischiefs of this school; and the principal evil arising from them is, that the virtues they exhibit are almost more dan-

gerous than the vices. The chief materials out of which these delusive systems are framed are characters who practise superfluous acts of generosity, while they are trampling on obvious and commanded duties; who combine inflated sentiments of honour with actions the most flagitious; a high tone of self-confidence, with a perpetual neglect of self-denial; pathetic apostrophes to the passions, without any attempt to resist them. They teach, that chastity is only individual attachment; that no duty exists which is not prompted by feeling; that impulse is the main spring of virtuous actions, while laws and religion are only unjust restraints; the former imposed by arbitrary men, the latter by the absurd prejudices of timorous and unenlightened consciences. Alas! they do not know that the best creature of impulse that ever lived is but a wayward, unfixed, unprincipled being; that the best *natural* man requires a curb, and needs that balance to the affections which Christianity alone can furnish, and without which benevolent propensities are no security to virtue. And, perhaps, it is not too much to say, in spite of the monopoly of benevolence to which the new philosophy lays claim, that the *human* duties of the second table have never once been well performed by any of the rejectors of that previous portion of the Decalogue which enjoins duty to *God*.

In some of the most splendid of these characters compassion is erected into the throne of justice, and justice degraded into the rank of plebeian vir-

tues. It is considered as a noble exemplification of sentiment that creditors should be defrauded, while the money due to them is lavished in dazzling acts of charity to some object that affects the senses; which paroxysms of charity are made the sponge of every sin, and the substitute of every virtue: the whole indirectly tending to intimate *how very benevolent people are who are not Christians.* From many of these compositions, indeed, Christianity is systematically, and always virtually, excluded; for the law, and the prophets, and the gospel, *can* make no part of a scheme in which this world is looked upon as all in all; in which want and misery are considered as evils arising solely from the defects of human governments, and not as making part of the dispensations of God; in which poverty is represented as merely a political evil, and the restraints which tend to keep the poor honest are painted as the most flagrant injustice. The Gospel *can* make no part of a system in which the absurd idea of perfectibility is considered as applicable to fallen creatures; in which the chimerical project of consummate earthly happiness (founded on the mad pretence of loving the poor better than God loves them) would defeat the divine plan, which meant this world for a scene of discipline, not of remuneration. The Gospel *can* have nothing to do with a system in which sin is reduced to a little human imperfection, and Old Bailey crimes are softened down into a few engaging weaknesses; and in which the turpitude of all the vices a man himself commits is done away by his

candour in tolerating all the vices committed by others.*

But the part of the system the most fatal to that class whom I am addressing is, that even in those works which do not go all the length of treating marriage as an unjust infringement on liberty, and a tyrannical deduction from general happiness; yet it commonly happens that the hero or heroine, who has practically violated the letter of the seventh commandment, and continues to live in the allowed violation of its spirit, is painted as so amiable and so benevolent, so tender or so heroic; and the temptation is represented as so *irresistible* (for all these philosophers are fatalists), the predominant and cherished sin is so filtered and defecated of its pollutions, and is so sheltered and surrounded, and relieved with shining qualities, that the innocent and impressible young reader is brought to lose all horror of the awful crime in question, in the complacency she feels for the engaging virtues of the criminal.

There is another object to which I would direct the exertion of that power of female influence of which I am speaking. Those ladies who take the lead in society are loudly called upon to act as the

* It is to be lamented that some, even of those more virtuous novel-writers, who *intend* to espouse the cause of religion, yet exhibit such false views of it. I have lately seen a work of some merit in this way, which was meritoriously designed to expose the impieties of the new philosophy. But the writer betrayed his own imperfect knowledge of the Christianity he was defending, by making his hero, whom he proposed as a pattern, *fight a duel!*

guardians of the public taste, as well as of the public virtue. They are called upon, therefore, to oppose with the whole weight of their influence the irruption of those swarms of publications now daily issuing from the banks of the Danube, which, like their ravaging predecessors of the darker ages, though with far other and more fatal arms, are over-running civilised society. Those readers, whose purer taste has been formed on the correct models of the old classic school, see with indignation and astonishment the Huns and Vandals once more overpowering the Greeks and Romans. They behold our minds, with a retrograde but rapid motion, hurried back to the reign of "chaos and old night," by distorted and unprincipled compositions, which, in spite of strong flashes of genius, unite the taste of the Goths with the morals of Bagshot *; —

Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire!

These compositions terrify the weak, and amaze and enchant the idle; while they disgust the discerning, by wild and misshapen superstitions, in which, with that *consistency* which forms so striking a feature of the new philosophy, those who most earnestly deny the immortality of the soul are most eager to introduce the machinery of ghosts.

* The newspapers announce that Schiller's tragedy of The Robbers, which inflamed the young nobility of Germany to enlist themselves into a band of highwaymen to rob in the forests of Bohemia, *is now acting in England by persons of quality!*

The writings of the French infidels were some years ago circulated in England with uncommon industry, and with some effect; but the sober sense and good principles of the far greater part of our countrymen resisted the attack, and rose superior to the trial. Of the doctrines and principles here alluded to, the dreadful consequences, not only in the unhappy country where they originated, and were almost universally adopted, but in every part of Europe where they have been received, have been such as to serve as a beacon to surrounding nations, if any warning can preserve them from destruction. In this country the subject is now so well understood, that every thing that issues from the *French* press is received with jealousy; and a work, on the first appearance of its exhibiting the doctrines of Voltaire and his associates, is rejected with indignation.

But let us not on account of this victory repose in confident security. The modern apostles of infidelity and immorality, little less indefatigable in dispersing their pernicious doctrines than the first apostles were in propagating gospel truths, have indeed changed their weapons, but they have by no means desisted from the attack. To destroy the principles of Christianity in this island appears at the present moment to be their grand aim. Deprived of the assistance of the French press, they are now attempting to attain their object under the close and more artificial veil of German literature. Conscious that religion and morals will stand or fall together, their attacks are sometimes

levelled against the one, and sometimes against the other. With strong occasional professions of general attachment to both of these, they endeavour to interest the feelings of the reader, sometimes in favour of some one particular vice, at other times on the subject of some one objection to revealed religion. Poetry as well as prose, romance as well as history, writings on philosophical as well as on political subjects, have thus been employed to instil the principles of *Illuminism*, while incredible pains have been taken to obtain able translations of every book which was supposed likely to be of use in corrupting the heart or misleading the understanding. In many of these translations, certain bolder passages, which, though well received in Germany, would have excited disgust in England, are wholly omitted, in order that the mind may be more certainly, though more slowly, prepared for the full effect of the same poison to be administered in a stronger degree at another period.

Let not those to whom these pages are addressed deceive themselves, by supposing this to be a fable; and let them enquire most seriously whether I speak truth, in asserting that the attacks of infidelity in Great Britain are at this moment principally directed against the female breast. Conscious of the influence of women in civil society, conscious of the effect which female infidelity produced in France, they attribute the ill success of their attempts in this country to their having been hitherto chiefly addressed to the male sex. They are now

sedulously labouring to destroy the religious principles of women, and in too many instances have fatally succeeded. For this purpose, not only novels and romances have been made the vehicles of vice and infidelity, but the same allurement has been held out to the women of our country which was employed in the garden of Eden by the first philosophist to the first sinner—*Knowledge*. Listen to the precepts of the new German enlighteners, and you need no longer remain in that situation in which Providence has placed you! Follow their examples, and you shall be permitted to indulge in all those gratifications which custom, not religion, has tolerated in the male sex!

Let us then jealously watch every deepening shade in the change of manners; let us mark every step, however inconsiderable, whose tendency is downwards. Corruption is neither stationary nor retrograde; and to have departed from modesty, simplicity, and truth, is already to have made a great progress. It is not only awfully true, that since the new principles have been afloat, *women* have been too eagerly inquisitive after these monstrous compositions; but it is true also that, with a new and offensive renunciation of their native delicacy, *many women of character* make little hesitation in avowing their familiarity with works abounding with principles, sentiments, and descriptions, "which should not be so much as named among them." By allowing their minds to come in contact with such contagious matter, they are irrecoverably tainting them; and by ac-

knowledging that they are actually conversant with such corruptions, with whatever reprobation of the author they may qualify their perusal of the book, they are exciting in others a most mischievous curiosity for the same unhallowed gratification. Thus they are daily diminishing in the young and the timid those wholesome scruples, by which, when a tender conscience ceases to be intrenched, all the subsequent stages of ruin are gradually facilitated.

We have hitherto spoken only of the German *writings;* but because there are multitudes who seldom read, equal pains have been taken to promote the same object through the medium of the stage; and this weapon is, of all others, that against which it is, at the present moment, the most important to warn the more inconsiderate of my country-women.

As a specimen of the German drama, it may not be unseasonable to offer a few remarks on the admired play of *The Stranger*. In this piece the character of an *adulteress*, which, in all periods of the world, ancient as well as modern, in all countries, heathen as well as Christian, has hitherto been held in detestation, and has never been introduced but to be reprobated, is for the first time presented to our view in the most pleasing and fascinating colours. The heroine is a woman who forsook her husband, the most affectionate and the most amiable, and lived for some time in a criminal commerce with her seducer. Repenting at length of her crime, she buries herself in

retirement. The talents of the poet during the whole piece are exerted in attempting to render this woman the object, not only of the compassion and forgiveness, but of the esteem and affection of the audience. The injured husband, convinced of his wife's repentance, forms a resolution which every man of true feeling and Christian piety will probably approve. He forgives her offence, and promises her through life his advice, protection, and fortune, together with every thing which can alleviate the misery of her condition, but refuses to replace her in the situation of his wife. But this is not sufficient for the *German* author. His efforts are employed, and it is to be feared but too successfully, in making the audience consider the husband as an unrelenting savage, while they are led by the art of the poet anxiously to wish to see an adulteress restored to that rank of women who have not violated the most solemn covenant that can be made with man, nor disobeyed one of the most positive laws which has been enjoined by God.

About the same time that this first attempt at representing an adulteress in an exemplary light was made by a German dramatist, which forms an era in manners, a direct vindication of adultery was, for the first time, attempted by a *woman*, a professed admirer and imitator of the German suicide, Werter. *The Female Werter*, as she is styled by her biographer, asserts, in a work entitled "The Wrongs of Women," that adultery is justifiable, and that the restrictions placed on it

by the laws of England constitute one of the *Wrongs of Women.*

This leads me to dwell a little longer on this most destructive class in the whole wide range of modern corrupters, who effect the most desperate work of the passions, without so much as pretending to urge their violence in extenuation of the guilt of indulging them. They solicit this very indulgence with a sort of cold-blooded speculation, and invite the reader to the most unbounded gratifications, with all the saturnine coolness of a geometrical calculation. Theirs is an iniquity rather of phlegm than of spirit; and in the pestilent atmosphere they raise about them, as in the infernal climate described by Milton, —

> The parching air
> Burns frore, and frost performs th' effects of fire. *

This cool, calculating, intellectual wickedness eats out the very heart and core of virtue, and, like a deadly mildew, blights and shrivels the blooming promise of the human spring. Its benumbing touch communicates a torpid sluggishness which paralyses the soul. It descants on depravity as temperately, and details its grossest acts as frigidly, as if its object were to *allay* the tumult of the passions, while it is letting them loose on mankind, by "plucking off the muzzle" of present restraint and future accountableness. The system is a dire

* "When the north wind bloweth it devoureth the mountains, and burneth the wilderness, and consumeth the grass as fire." Ecclus. xl. 20.

infusion, compounded of bold impiety, brutish sensuality, and exquisite folly, which, creeping fatally about the heart, checks the moral circulation, and totally stops the pulse of goodness by the extinction of the vital principle. Thus it not only chokes the stream of actual virtue, but dries up the very fountain of future remorse and remote repentance.

The ravages which some of the old offenders against purity made in the youthful heart, by the exercise of a fervid but licentious imagination on the passions, resembled the mischief effected by floods, cataracts, and volcanoes. The desolation, indeed, was terrible, and the ruin was tremendous: yet it was a ruin which did not *infallibly* preclude the possibility of recovery. The country, though deluged and devastated, was not utterly put beyond the power of restoration. The harvests, indeed, were destroyed, and all was wide sterility: but though the crops were lost, the *seeds* of vegetation were not absolutely eradicated; so that, after a long and barren blank, fertility *might* finally return.

But the heart once infected with this newly-medicated venom, subtile though sluggish in its operation, resembles what travellers relate of that blasted spot the Dead Sea, where those devoted cities once stood which for their pollutions were burnt with fire from heaven. It continues a stagnant lake of putrefying waters. No wholesome blade evermore shoots up: the air is so tainted that no living thing subsists within its influence.

Near the sulphureous pool the very principle of being is annihilated. All is death,

> Death, unrepealable, eternal death!

But let us take comfort. These projects are not yet generally realised. These atrocious principles are not yet adopted into common practice. Though corruptions seem, with a confluent tide, to be pouring in upon us from every quarter, yet there is still left among us a discriminating judgment. Clear and strongly-marked distinctions between right and wrong still subsist. While we continue to cherish this sanity of mind, the case is not desperate. Though that crime, the growth of which always exhibits the most irrefragable proof of the dissoluteness of public manners; that crime, which cuts up order and virtue by the roots, and violates the sanctity of vows, is awfully increasing,

> 'Till senates seem,
> For purposes of empire less convened
> Than to release the adult'ress from her bonds;

yet, thanks to the surviving efficacy of a holy religion, to the operation of virtuous laws, and to the energy and unshaken integrity with which these laws are *now* administered, and, most of all, perhaps, to a standard of morals which continues in force, when the principles which sanctioned it are neglected, this crime, in the female sex at least, is still held in just abhorrence. If it be practised, it is not honourable; if it be committed,

it is not justified; we do not yet affect to palliate its turpitude; as *yet* it hides its abhorred head in lurking privacy; and reprobation *hitherto* follows its publicity.

But on YOUR exerting your influence, with just application and increasing energy, may, in no small degree, depend whether this corruption shall still continue to be resisted. For the abhorrence of a practice will too probably diminish, of which the theory is perused with enthusiasm. From admiring to adopting, the step is short, and the progress rapid. And it is in the moral as in the natural world; the motion, in the case of minds as well as of bodies, is accelerated as they approach the centre to which they are tending.

Oh! ye to whom this address is particularly directed, an awful charge is, in this instance, committed to your hands: as you discharge it or shrink from it, you promote or injure the honour of your daughters and the happiness of your sons, of both which you are the depositaries. And, while you resolutely persevere in making a stand against the encroachments of this crime, suffer not your firmness to be shaken by that affectation of charity which is growing into a general substitute for principle. Abuse not so noble a quality as Christian candour, by misemploying it in instances to which it does not apply. Pity the wretched woman you dare not countenance, and bless HIM who has "made you to differ." If, unhappily, she be your relation or friend, anxiously watch for the period when she shall be deserted by her betrayer, and

see if, by your Christian offices, she can be snatched from a perpetuity of vice. But if, through the Divine blessing on your patient endeavours, she should ever be awakened to remorse, be not anxious to restore the forlorn penitent to that society against whose laws she has so grievously offended; and remember, that her soliciting such a restoration furnishes but too plain a proof that she is not the penitent your partiality would believe, since penitence is more anxious to make its peace with Heaven than with the world. Joyfully would a truly contrite spirit commute an earthly for an everlasting reprobation. To restore a criminal to public society, is perhaps to tempt her to repeat her crime, or to deaden her repentance for having committed it, as well as to insult and to injure that society; while, to restore a strayed soul to God will add lustre to your Christian character, and brighten your eternal crown.

In the mean time, there are other evils, ultimately, perhaps, tending to this, into which we are falling, through that sort of fashionable candour, which, as was hinted above, is among the mischievous characteristics of the present day; of which period perhaps it is not the smallest evil, that vices are made to look so like virtues, and are so assimilated to them, that it requires watchfulness and judgment sufficiently to analyse and discriminate. There are certain women of good fashion who practise irregularities not consistent with the strictness of virtue; while their good sense and knowledge of the world make them at

the same time keenly alive to the value of reputation. They want to retain their indulgences, without quite forfeiting their credit; but finding their fame fast declining, they artfully cling, by flattery and marked attentions, to a few persons of more than ordinary character; and thus, till they are driven to let go their hold, continue to prop a falling fame.

On the other hand, there are not wanting women of distinction of very correct general conduct, and of no ordinary sense and virtue, who, confiding with a high mind on what they too confidently call *the integrity of their own hearts;* anxious to deserve a good fame, on the one hand, by a life free from reproach, yet secretly too desirous, on the other, of securing a worldly and fashionable reputation;—these, while their general associates are persons of honour, and their general resort places of safety, yet allow themselves to be occasionally present at the midnight orgies of revelry and gaming, in houses of no honourable estimation; and thus help to keep up characters, which, without their sustaining hand, would sink to their just level of contempt and reprobation. While they are holding out this plank to a drowning reputation, rather, it is to be feared, showing their own strength, than assisting another's weakness, they value themselves, perhaps, on not partaking of the worst parts of the amusements which may be carrying on; but they sanction them by their presence; they lend their countenance to corruptions they should abhor; they lend their example to the

young and inexperienced, who are looking about for some such sanction to justify them in that to which they were before inclined, but were too timid to have ventured upon without the protection of such unsullied names. Thus these respectable characters, without looking to the general consequences of their indiscretion, are thoughtlessly employed in breaking down, as it were, the broad fence which should ever separate two very different sorts of society, and are becoming a kind of unnatural link between vice and virtue.

There is a gross deception, which even persons of reputation practise on themselves. They loudly condemn vice and irregularity as an abstract principle; nay, they stigmatise them in persons of an opposite party, or in those from whom they themselves have no prospect of personal advantage or amusement, and in whom therefore they have no particular interest to tolerate evil. But the same disorders are viewed without abhorrence when practised by those who in any way minister to *their* pleasures. Refined entertainments, luxurious decorations, select music, whatever furnishes any delight rare and exquisite to the senses, these soften the severity of criticism; these palliate sins, these varnish over the flaws of a broken character, and extort not pardon merely, but justification, countenance, intimacy. The more respectable will not, perhaps, go all the length of vindicating the disreputable vice, but they affect to disbelieve its existence in the individual instance; or, failing in this, they will bury its acknowledged turpitude

in the seducing qualities of the agreeable delinquent. Talents of every kind are considered as a commutation for a few vices; and such talents are made a passport to introduce into honourable society characters whom their profligacy ought to exclude from it.

But the great object to which YOU, who are or may be mothers, are more especially called, is the education of your children. If we are responsible for the use of influence in the case of those over whom we have no immediate control, in the case of our children we are responsible for the exercise of *acknowledged power*; — a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, and inestimable in its importance. On YOU depend, in no small degree, the principles of the whole rising generation. To your direction the daughters are almost exclusively committed; and until a certain age, to YOU also is consigned the mighty privilege of forming the hearts and minds of your infant sons. To YOU is made over the awfully important trust of infusing the first principles of piety into the tender minds of those who may one day be called to instruct, not families merely, but districts; to influence, not individuals, but senates. Your private exertions may at this moment be contributing to the future happiness; your domestic neglect, to the future ruin, of your country: and may you never forget, in this your early instruction of your offspring, nor they, in their future application of it, that religion is the only sure ground of morals; that private principle is the only solid basis of public virtue.

Oh! think that they both may be fixed or forfeited for ever according to the use YOU are now making of that power which God has delegated to you, and of which he will demand a strict account. By his blessing on your pious labours may both sons and daughters hereafter "arise and call you blessed;" and in the great day of general account, may every Christian mother be enabled, through Divine grace, to say, with humble confidence, to her Maker and Redeemer, "Behold the children whom thou hast given me!"

Christianity, driven out from the rest of the world, has still, blessed be God, a "strong hold" in this country; and though it be the special duty of the appointed "watchman, *now* that he seeth the sword come upon the land, to blow the trumpet and warn the people, which if he neglect to do, their blood shall be required of the watchman's hand*;" yet, in this sacred garrison, *impregnable but by neglect*, YOU, too, have an awful post, — that of arming the minds of the rising race with the "shield of faith, whereby they shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked;" — "that of girding them with that sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." Let that very period which is desecrated in a neighbouring country, by a formal renunciation of religion, be solemnly marked by YOU to purposes diametrically opposite; let that dishonoured era, in which *they* avowed their resolution to exclude Christianity from the national education, be the precise moment seized upon by

* Ezekiel, xxxiii. 6.

YOU for its more sedulous inculcation; and while *their* children are systematically trained to "live without God in the world," let YOURS, with a more decided emphasis, be consecrated to promote his glory in it.

If you neglect this your bounden duty, you will have effectually contributed to expel Christianity from Britain, her last citadel; and remember, that the dignity of the work to which you are called is no less than that of "preserving the ark of the Lord."

CHAP. II.

ON THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN. — THE PREVAILING SYSTEM TENDS TO ESTABLISH THE ERRORS WHICH IT OUGHT TO CORRECT. — DANGERS ARISING FROM AN EXCESSIVE CULTIVATION OF THE ARTS.

It is far from being the object of this slight work to offer a regular plan of female education, — a task which has been often more properly assumed by far abler writers; but it is intended rather to suggest a few remarks on the reigning mode, which, though it has had many panegyrists, appears to be defective, not only in certain particulars, but as a general system. There are, indeed, numberless honourable exceptions to an observation which will be thought severe; yet the author would ask, whether it be not the natural tendency of the prevailing and popular mode to excite and promote those very evils which it ought to be the main end and object of Christian instruction to remove? whether the reigning system does not tend to weaken the principles it ought to strengthen, and to dissolve the heart it should fortify? whether, instead of directing the grand and important engine of education to attack and destroy *vanity, selfishness, and inconsideration*, that triple alliance in strict and constant league against female virtue, the combined powers of instruction

are not sedulously confederated in confirming their strength, and establishing their empire?

If indeed the *material* substance; if the body and limbs, with the organs and senses, be really the more valuable objects of attention, then there is little room for animadversion and improvement; but if the immaterial and immortal mind; if the heart, "out of which are the issues of life," be the main concern; if the great business of education be to implant right ideas, to communicate useful knowledge, to form a correct taste and a sound judgment, to resist evil propensities, and, above all, to seize the favourable season for infusing principles and confirming habits; if education be a school to fit us for life, and life be a school to fit us for eternity; if such, I repeat it, be the chief work and grand ends of education, it may then be worth enquiring how far these ends are likely to be effected by the prevailing system?

Is it not a fundamental error in Christians to consider children as innocent beings, whose little weaknesses may, perhaps, want some correction, rather than as beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil dispositions, which it should be the great end of education to rectify? This appears to be such a foundation-truth, that if I were asked what quality is most important in an instructor of youth, I should not hesitate to reply, *Such a strong impression of the corruption of our nature as should insure a disposition to counteract it; together with such a deep view and thorough knowledge of the human heart as should*

be necessary for developing and controlling its most secret and complicated workings. And let us remember, that to *know the world*, as it is called, that is, to know its local manners, its temporary usages, and evanescent fashions, is not to *know human nature;* and that where this prime knowledge is wanting, those natural evils, which ought to be counteracted, will be inevitably fostered.

Vanity, for instance, is reckoned among the light and venial errors of youth; nay, so far from being treated as a dangerous enemy, it is often called in as an auxiliary. At worst, it is considered as a harmless weakness, which subtracts little from the value of a character; as a natural effervescence, which will subside of itself, when the first ferment of the youthful passions shall have done working. But those persons know little of the conformation of the human and especially of the female heart, who fancy that vanity is ever exhausted, by the mere operation of time and events. Let those who maintain this opinion look into our places of public resort, and there behold if the ghost of departed beauty is not, to its last flitting, fond of haunting the scenes of its past pleasures. The soul, unwilling (if I may borrow an allusion from the Platonic mythology) to quit the spot in which the body enjoyed its former delights, still continues to hover about the same place, though the same pleasures are no longer to be found there. Disappointments, indeed, may divert vanity into a new direction; prudence may prevent it from breaking out into excesses,

and age may prove that it is "vexation of spirit;" but neither disappointment, prudence, nor age can *cure* it; for they do not correct the principle. Nay, the very disappointment itself serves as a painful evidence of its protracted existence.

Since, then, there is a season when the youthful must cease to be young, and the beautiful to excite admiration; to learn how to grow old gracefully is, perhaps, one of the rarest and most valuable arts which can be taught to woman. And it must be confessed it is a most severe trial for those women to be called to lay down beauty, who have nothing else to take up. It is for this sober season of life that education should lay up its rich resources. However disregarded they may hitherto have been, they will be wanted now. When admirers fall away, and flatterers become mute, the mind will be compelled to retire into itself; and if it find no entertainment at home, it will be driven back again upon the world with increased force. Yet forgetting this, do we not seem to educate our daughters exclusively for the transient period of youth, when it is to maturer life we ought to advert? Do we not educate them for a crowd, forgetting that they are to live at home? for the world, and not for themselves? for show, and not for use? for time, and not for eternity?

Vanity (and the same may be said of selfishness) is not to be resisted like any other vice, which is sometimes busy and sometimes quiet: it is not to be attacked as a single fault, which is indulged in opposition to a single virtue; but it is uniformly

to be controlled, as an active, a restless, a growing, a pervading principle, at constant war with all the Christian graces; which not only mixes itself with all our faults, but insinuates itself into all our virtues too; and will, if not checked effectually, rob our best actions of their reward. Vanity, if I may use the analogy, is, with respect to the other vices, what feeling is in regard to the other senses; it is not confined in its operation to the eye, or the ear, or any single organ, but is diffused through the whole being, alive in every part, awakened and communicated by the slightest touch.

Not a few of the evils of the present day arise from a new and perverted application of terms: among these, perhaps, there is not one more abused, misunderstood, or misapplied, than the term *accomplishments*. This word, in its original meaning, signifies *completeness, perfection*. But I may safely appeal to the observation of mankind, whether they do not meet with swarms of youthful females, issuing from our boarding-schools, as well as emerging from the more private scenes of domestic education, who are introduced into the world, under the broad and universal title of *accomplished young ladies*, of *all* of whom it cannot very truly and correctly be pronounced, that they illustrate the definition by a completeness which leaves nothing to be added, and a perfection which leaves nothing to be desired.

This frenzy of accomplishments, unhappily, is no longer restricted within the usual limits of rank and fortune; the middle orders have caught the

contagion, and it rages downward with increasing and destructive violence, from the elegantly dressed but slenderly portioned curate's daughter, to the equally fashionable daughter of the little tradesman, and of the more opulent but not more judicious farmer. And is it not obvious, that as far as this epidemical mania has spread, this very valuable part of society is declining in usefulness, as it rises in its ill-founded pretensions to elegance, till this rapid revolution of the manners of the middle class has so far altered the character of the age, as to be in danger of rendering obsolete the heretofore common saying, "that most worth and virtue are to be found in the middle station?" For I do not scruple to assert, that in general, as far as my little observation has extended, this class of females, in what relates both to religious knowledge and to practical industry, falls short both of the very high and the very low. Their new course of education, and the indolent habits of life, and the elegance of dress connected with it, peculiarly unfit them for the active duties of their own very important condition; while with frivolous eagerness, and second-hand opportunities, they run to snatch a few of those showy acquirements which decorate the great. This is done apparently with one or other of these views; either to make their fortune by marriage, or if that fail, to qualify them to become teachers of others: hence the abundant multiplication of superficial wives, and of incompetent and illiterate governesses. The use of the pencil, the perform-

ance of exquisite but unnecessary works, the study of foreign languages and of music, require (with some exceptions which should always be made in favour of great natural genius) a degree of leisure which belongs exclusively to affluence. * One use of learning languages is, not that we may know what the terms which express the articles of our dress and our table are called in French or Italian, nor that we may think over a few ordinary phrases in English, and then translate them, without one foreign idiom; — for he who cannot *think* in a language cannot be said to understand it: — but the great use of acquiring any foreign language is, either that it enables us occasionally to converse with foreigners unacquainted with any other, or that it is a key to the literature of the country to which it belongs. Now those humbler females, the chief part of whose time is required for domestic offices, are little likely to fall in the way of foreigners; and so far from enjoying opportunities for the acquisition of foreign literature, they have seldom time to possess themselves of much of that valuable knowledge which the books of their own country so abundantly furnish; and the acquisition of which would be so much more useful and honourable than the paltry accessions they make, by hammering out the meaning of a few passages in a tongue they but imperfectly understand, and of which they are never likely to make any use.

* Those among the class in question, whose own good sense leads them to avoid these mistaken pursuits, cannot be offended at a reproof which does not belong to them.

It would be well if the reflection how eagerly this redundancy of accomplishments is seized on by their inferiors were to operate as in the case of other absurd fashions; the rich and great being seldom brought to renounce any mode or custom, from the mere consideration that it is preposterous, or that it is wrong; while they are frightened into its immediate relinquishment, from the pressing consideration that the *vulgar* are beginning to adopt it.

But to return to that more elevated, and, on account of their more extended influence only, that more important class of females, to whose use this little work is more immediately dedicated. Some popular authors, on the subject of female instruction, had for a time established a fantastic code of artificial manners. They had refined elegance into insipidity, frittered down delicacy into frivolousness, and reduced manner into *minauderie*. "But to lisp, and to amble, and to nickname God's creatures," has nothing to do with true gentleness of mind; and to be silly makes no necessary part of softness. Another class of contemporary authors turned all the force of their talents to excite *emotions*, to inspire *sentiment*, and to reduce all mental and moral excellence into *sympathy* and *feeling*. These softer qualities were elevated at the expense of principle; and young women were incessantly hearing unqualified sensibility extolled as the perfection of their nature; till those who really possessed this amiable quality, instead of directing, and chastening, and restraining it, were

in danger of fostering it to their hurt, and began to consider themselves as deriving their excellence from its excess; while those less interesting damsels, who happened not to find any of this amiable sensibility in their *hearts*, but thought it creditable to have it somewhere, fancied its seat was in the *nerves;* and here, indeed, it was easily found or feigned; till a false and excessive display of feeling became so predominant, as to bring in question the actual existence of that true tenderness, without which, though a woman may be worthy, she can never be amiable.

Fashion, then, by one of her sudden and rapid turns, instantaneously struck out both real sensibility and the affectation of it from the standing list of female perfections, and, by a quick touch of her magic wand, shifted the scene, and at once produced the bold and independent beauty, the intrepid female, the hoyden, the huntress, and the archer; the swinging arms, the confident address, the regimental, and the four-in-hand. Such self-complacent heroines made us ready to regret their softer predecessors, who had aimed only at *pleasing* the other sex, while these aspiring fair ones struggled for the bolder renown of *rivalling* them; the project failed: for, whereas the former had sued for admiration, the latter challenged, seized, compelled it; but the men, as was natural, continued to prefer the more modest claimant to the sturdy competitor.

It would be well if we, who have the advantage of contemplating the errors of the two extremes,

were to look for truth where she is commonly to be found, in the plain and obvious middle path, equally remote from each excess; and, while we bear in mind that helplessness is not delicacy, let us also remember that masculine manners do not necessarily include strength of character nor vigour of intellect. Should we not reflect, also, that we are neither to train up Amazons nor Circassians, but that it is our business to form Christians? that we have to educate not only rational but accountable beings; and, remembering this, should we not be solicitous to let our daughters learn of the well-taught, and associate with the well-bred? In training them, should we not carefully cultivate intellect, implant religion, and cherish modesty? Then, whatever is engaging in manners would be the natural result of whatever is just in sentiment and correct in principle; softness would grow out of humility, and external delicacy would spring from purity of heart. Then the decorums, the proprieties, the elegancies, and even the graces, as far as they are simple, pure, and honest, would follow as an almost inevitable consequence; for to follow in the train of the Christian virtues, and not to take the lead of them, is the proper place which religion assigns to the graces.

Whether we have made the best use of the errors of our predecessors and of our own numberless advantages, and whether the prevailing system be really consistent with sound policy, true taste, or Christian principle, it may be worth our while to enquire.

Would not a stranger be led to imagine by a view of the reigning mode of female education, that human life consisted of one universal holiday, and that the grand contest between the several competitors was, who should be most eminently qualified to excel and carry off the prize, in the various shows and games which were intended to be exhibited in it? and to the exhibitors themselves, would he not be ready to apply Sir Francis Bacon's observation on the Olympian victors, that they were so excellent in these unnecessary things, that their perfection must needs have been acquired by the neglect of whatever was necessary?

What would the polished Addison, who thought that one great end of a lady's learning to dance was, that she might know how to sit still gracefully; what would even the pagan historian * of the great Roman conspirator, who could commemorate it among the defects of his hero's *accomplished* mistress, "that she was too good a singer and dancer for a virtuous woman;" — what would these refined critics have said, had they lived, as we have done, to see the art of dancing lifted into such importance, that it cannot with any degree of safety be confided to one instructor; but a whole train of successive masters are considered as absolutely essential to its perfection? What would these accurate judges of female manners have said, to see a modest young lady first delivered into the hands of a military serjeant to instruct her in the *feminine* art of marching? and

* Sallust.

when this delicate acquisition is attained, to see her transferred to a professor, who is to teach her the Scotch steps; which professor, having communicated his indispensable portion of this indispensable art, makes way for the professor of French dances; and all, perhaps, in their turn, either yield to, or have the honour to co-operate with, a finishing master; each probably receiving a stipend which would make the pious curate or the learned chaplain rich and happy? *

The science of music, which used to be communicated in so competent a degree to a young lady by *one* able instructor, is now distributed among a whole band. She now requires, not a master, but an orchestra. And my country readers would accuse me of exaggeration, were I to hazard enumerating the variety of musical teachers who attend at the same time in the same family, the daughters of which are summoned, by at least as many instruments as the subjects of Nebuchadnezzar, to worship the idol which fashion has set up. They would be incredulous were I to produce real instances in which the delighted mother has been heard to declare, that the visits of masters of every art, and the different masters for various gradations of the same art, followed each other in such close and rapid succession during the whole London residence, that her girls had not a moment's interval to look into a book; nor could

* When this little work was written, the indecent and offensive *Waltz* had not been added to the amusements of our virtuous young ladies.

she contrive any method to introduce one, till she happily devised the scheme of reading to them herself, for half an hour, while they were drawing, by which means no time was lost.*

Before the evil is past redress, it will be prudent to reflect that in all polished countries an entire devotedness to the fine arts has been one grand source of the corruption of the women; and so justly were these pernicious consequences appreciated by the Greeks, among whom these arts were carried to the highest possible perfection, that they seldom allowed them to be cultivated to a very exquisite degree by women of great purity of character. And if the ambition of an elegant British lady should be fired by the idea that the accomplished females of those polished states were the admired companions of the philosophers, the poets, the wits, and the artists of Athens; and their beauty or talents, so much the favourite sub-

* Since the first edition of this work appeared, the author has received from a person of great eminence the following statement, ascertaining the *time* employed in the acquisition of music in one instance. As a *general* calculation, it will perhaps be found to be so far from exaggerated, as to be below the truth. The statement concludes with remarking, that the individual who is the subject of it is now married to a man who *dislikes music!*

Suppose your pupil to begin at six years of age, and to continue at the average of four hours a day *only*, Sunday excepted, and thirteen days allowed for travelling annually, till she is eighteen, the statement stands thus:—300 days multiplied by four, the number of hours amount to 1200; that number multiplied by twelve, which is the number of years, amounts to 14,400 hours!

jects of the muse, the lyre, the pencil, and the chisel, that their pictures and statues furnished the most consummate models of Grecian art; — if, I say, the accomplished females of our day are panting for similar renown, let their modesty chastise their ambition, by recollecting that these celelebrated women are not to be found among the chaste wives and the virtuous daughters of the Aristideses, the Agises, and the Phocions; but that they are to be looked for among the Phrynes, the Laises, the Aspasias, and the Glyceras. I am persuaded the truly Christian female, whatever be her taste or her talents, will renounce the desire of any celebrity when attached to impurity of character, with the same noble indignation with which the virtuous biographer of the above-named heroes renounced any kind of fame which might be dishonestly attained, by exclaiming, "I had rather it should be said there never was a Plutarch, than that they should say Plutarch was malignant, unjust, or envious." *

And while this corruption, brought on by an excessive cultivation of the arts, has contributed its full share to the decline of states, it has always furnished an infallible symptom of their impending fall. The satires of the most penetrating and judicious of the Roman poets, corroborating the testimonies of the most accurate of their historians, abound with invectives against the general de-

* No censure is levelled at the exertions of real genius, which is as valuable as it is rare; but at the absurdity of that system which is erecting *the whole sex* into artists.

pravity of manners, introduced by the corrupt habits of female education. The bitterness and gross indelicacy of some of these satirists (too gross to be either quoted or referred to) make little against their authority in these points; for how shocking must those corruptions have been, and how obviously offensive their causes, which could have appeared so highly disgusting to minds so coarse, as not likely to be scandalised by slight deviations from decency! The famous ode of Horace, attributing the vices and disasters of his degenerate country to the same cause, might, were it quite free from the above objections, be produced, I will not presume to say as an exact picture of the existing manners, of *this* country, but may I not venture to say, as a prophecy, the fulfilment of which cannot be very remote? It may, however, be observed, that the modesty of the Roman matron, and the chaste demeanour of her virgin daughters, which amidst the stern virtues of the state were as immaculate and pure as the honour of the Roman citizen, fell a sacrifice to the luxurious dissipation brought in by their Asiatic conquest; after which the females were soon taught a complete change of character. They were instructed to accommodate their talents of pleasing to the more vitiated tastes of the other sex; and began to study every grace and every art which might captivate the exhausted hearts, and excite the wearied and capricious inclinations of the men; till by a rapid and at length complete enervation, the Roman character lost its signa-

ture, and through a quick succession of slavery, effeminacy, and vice, sunk into that degeneracy of which some of the modern Italian states now serve to furnish a too just specimen.

It is of the essence of human things that the same objects which are highly useful in their season, measure, and degree, become mischievous in their excess, at other periods, and under other circumstances. In a state of barbarism, the arts are among the best reformers; and they go on to be improved themselves, and improving those who cultivate them, till, having reached a certain point, those very arts which were the instruments of civilisation and refinement, become instruments of corruption and decay; enervating and depraving, in the second instance, by the excess and universality of their cultivation, as certainly as they refined in the first. They become agents of voluptuousness. They excite the imagination; and the imagination thus excited, and no longer under the government of strict principle, becomes the most dangerous stimulant of the passions; promotes a too keen relish for pleasure, teaching how to multiply its sources, and inventing new and pernicious modes of artificial gratification.

May we not rank among the present corrupt consequences of this unbounded cultivation, the unchaste *costume*, the impure style of dress, and that indelicate statue-like exhibition of the female figure, which by its artfully disposed folds, its seemingly wet and adhesive drapery, so defines the form as to prevent covering itself from becoming a

veil? This licentious mode, as the acute Montesquieu observed on the dances of the Spartan virgins, has taught us "to strip chastity itself of modesty."

May the author be allowed to address to our own country and our own circumstances, to both of which they seem peculiarly applicable, the spirit of that beautiful apostrophe of the most polished poet of antiquity to the most victorious nation? "Let us leave to the inhabitants of *conquered countries* the praise of carrying to the very highest degree of perfection sculpture and the sister arts; but let *this* country direct her own exertions to the art of governing mankind in equity and peace, of showing mercy to the submissive, and of abasing the proud among surrounding nation." *

* Let me not be suspected of bringing into any sort of comparison the gentleness of British government with the rapacity of Roman conquests, or the tyrannical principles of Roman dominion. To spoil, to butcher, and to commit every kind of violence, they call, says one of the ablest of their historians, by the lying name of *government*, and when they have spread a general desolation they call it *peace*. †

With such *dictatorial*, or as we might now read, *directorial* inquisitors, *we* can have no point of contact; and if I have applied the servile flattery of a delightful poet to the purpose of English happiness, it was only to show wherein true national grandeur consists, and that every country pays too dear a price for those arts and embellishments of society, which endanger the loss of its morals and manners.

† Tacitus's Life of Agricola, speech of Galgacus to his soldiers.

CHAP. III.

EXTERNAL IMPROVEMENT. — CHILDREN'S BALLS. — FRENCH GOVERNESSES.

LET me not, however, be misunderstood. The customs which fashion has established, when they are not in opposition to what is right, when they are not hostile to virtue, should unquestionably be pursued in the education of ladies. Piety maintains no natural war with elegance, and Christianity would be no gainer by making her disciples unamiable. Religion does not forbid that the exterior be made to a certain degree the object of attention. But the admiration bestowed, the sums expended, and the time lavished on arts, which add little to the intrinsic value of life, should have limitations. While these arts should be admired, let them not be admired above their just value; while they are practised, let it not be to the exclusion of higher employments; while they are cultivated, let it be to amuse leisure, not to engross life.

But it happens unfortunately, that to ordinary observers, the girl who is really receiving the worst instruction often makes the best figure; while in the more correct but less ostensible education, the deep and sure foundations, to which the edifice will owe its strength and stability, lie out of sight. The outward accomplishments have the dangerous advantage of addressing themselves more im-

mediately to the senses, and, of course, meet every where with those who can in some measure appreciate as well as admire them; for all can see and hear, but all cannot scrutinise and discriminate. External acquirements, too, recommend themselves the more because they are more rapidly, as well as more visibly, progressive; while the mind is led on to improvement by slow motions and imperceptible degrees; while the heart must now be admonished by reproof, and now allured by kindness: its liveliest advances being suddenly impeded by obstinacy, and its brightest prospects often obscured by passion; it is slow in its acquisitions of virtue, and reluctant in its approaches to piety; and its progress, when any progress is made, does not obtrude itself on vulgar observation. The unruly and turbulent propensities of the mind are not so obedient to the forming hand, as defects of manner or awkwardness of gait. Often when we fancy that a troublesome passion is completely crushed, we have the mortification to find that we have "scotch'd the snake, not killed it." One evil temper starts up before another is conquered. The subduing hand cannot cut off the ever-sprouting heads so fast as the prolific Hydra can reproduce them, nor fell the stubborn Antæus so often as he can recruit his strength, and rise in vigorous and repeated opposition.

Hired teachers are also under a disadvantage resembling tenants at rack-rent; it is their interest to bring in an immediate revenue of praise and profit, and, for the sake of a present rich crop,

those who are not strictly conscientious, do not care how much the ground is impoverished for future produce. But parents who are the lords of the soil must look to permanent value, and to continued fruitfulness. The best effects of a careful education are often very remote; they are to be discovered in future scenes, and exhibited in as yet untried connections. "Every event of life will be putting the heart into fresh situations, and making new demands on its prudence, its firmness, its integrity, or its forbearance. Those whose business it is to form and model it, cannot foresee these contingent situations specifically and distinctly; yet, as far as human wisdom will allow, they must enable it to prepare for them all by general principles, correct habits, and an unremitted sense of dependence on the Great Disposer of events. As the soldier must learn and practise all his evolutions, though he do not know on what service his leader may command him, by what particular foe he shall be most assailed, nor what mode of attack the enemy may employ, so must the young Christian militant be prepared by previous discipline for actual duty.

But the contrary of all this is the case with external acquisitions. The master, it is his interest, will industriously instruct his young pupil to set all her improvements in the most immediate and conspicuous point of view. To attract admiration is the great principle sedulously inculcated into her young heart, and is considered as the fundamental maxim; and, perhaps, if we were required

to condense the reigning system of the brilliant education of a lady into an aphorism, it might be comprised in this short sentence, *To allure and to shine.* This system, however, is the fruitful germ, from which a thousand yet unborn vanities, with all their multiplied ramifications, will spring. A tender mother cannot but feel an honest triumph in contemplating those talents in her daughter, which will necessarily excite admiration; but she will also shudder at the vanity that admiration may excite, and at the new ideas it will awaken; and, startling as it may sound, the labours of a wise mother, anxious for her daughter's best interests, will seem to be at variance with those of all her teachers. She will, indeed, rejoice at her progress, but she will rejoice with trembling; for she is fully aware, that if all possible accomplishments could be bought at the price of a single virtue, of a single principle, the purchase would be infinitely dear, and she would reject the dazzling but destructive acquisition. She knows that the superstructure of the accomplishments can be alone safely erected on the broad and solid basis of Christian humility: nay more, that as the materials of which that superstructure is to be composed are in themselves of so unstable and tottering a nature, the foundation must be deepened and enlarged with more abundant care, otherwise the fabric will be overloaded with its own ornaments, and what was intended only to embellish the building will prove the occasion of its fall.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time

for every purpose under heaven," said the wise man; but he said it before the invention of BABY-BALLS; an invention which has formed a kind of era, and a most inauspicious one, in the annals of polished education. This modern device is a sort of triple conspiracy against the innocence, the health, and the happiness of children. Thus, by factitious amusements, to rob them of a relish for the simple joys, the unbought delights, which naturally belong to their blooming season, is like blotting out spring from the year. To sacrifice the true and proper enjoyments of sprightly and happy children, is to make them pay a dear and disproportionate price for their artificial pleasures. They step at once from the nursery to the ball-room; and, by a change of habits, as new as it is preposterous, are thinking of dressing themselves, at an age when they used to be dressing their dolls. Instead of bounding with the unrestrained freedom of little wood-nymphs over hill and dale, their cheeks flushed with health, and their hearts overflowing with happiness, these *gay* little creatures are shut up all the morning, demurely practising the *pas grave*, and transacting the serious business of acquiring a new step for the evening, with more cost of time and pains than it would have taken them to acquire twenty new ideas.

Thus they lose the amusements which properly belong to their smiling period, and unnaturally anticipate those pleasures (such as they are) which would come in, too much of course, on their introduction into fashionable life. The true pleasures

of childhood are cheap and natural; for every object teems with delight to eyes and hearts new to the enjoyment of life; nay, the hearts of healthy children abound with a general disposition to mirth and joyfulness, even without a specific object to excite it; like our first parent, in the world's first spring, when all was new, and fresh, and gay about him,

> they live, and move,
> And feel that they are happier than they know.

Only furnish them with a few simple and harmless materials, and a little, but not too much, leisure, and they will manufacture their own pleasures with more skill, and success, and satisfaction, than they will receive from all that your money can purchase. Their bodily recreations should be such as will promote their health, quicken their activity, enliven their spirits, whet their ingenuity, and qualify them for their mental work. But, if you begin thus early to create wants, to invent gratifications, to multiply desires, to waken dormant sensibilities, to stir up hidden fires, you are studiously laying up for your children a store of premature caprice and irritability, of impatience and discontent.

While childhood preserves its native simplicity, every little change is interesting, every gratification is a luxury. A ride or a walk, a garland of flowers of her own forming, a plant of her own cultivating, will be a delightful amusement to a child in her natural state; but these harmless and interesting recreations will be dull and tasteless to a sophisticated little creature, nursed in such forced, and

costly, and vapid pleasures. Alas! that we should throw away this first grand opportunity of working into a practical habit the moral of this important truth, that the chief source of human discontent is to be looked for, not in our real, but in our fictitious wants; not in the demands of nature, but in the insatiable cravings of artificial desire!

When we see the growing zeal to crowd the midnight ball with these pretty fairies, we should be almost tempted to fancy it was a kind of pious emulation among the mothers to cure their infants of a fondness for vain and foolish pleasures, by tiring them out by this premature familiarity with them; and we should be so desirous to invent an excuse for a practice so inexcusable, that we should be ready to hope that they were actuated by something of the same principle which led the Spartans to introduce their sons to scenes of riot, that they might conceive an early disgust at vice! or, possibly, that they imitated those Scythian mothers who used to plunge their new-born infants into the flood, thinking none to be worth saving who could not stand this early struggle for their lives. The greater part, indeed, as it might have been expected, perished; but the parents took comfort, that if many were lost, the few who escaped would be the stronger for having been thus exposed!

To behold Lilliputian coquettes projecting dresses, studying colours, assorting ribands, mixing flowers, and choosing feathers; their little hearts beating with hopes about partners and fears about rivals; to see their fresh cheeks pale after the midnight supper, their aching heads and unbraced

nerves, disqualifying the little languid beings for the next day's task; and to hear the grave apology, "that it is owing to the wine, the crowd, the heated room of the last night's ball;" all this, I say, would really be as ludicrous, if the mischief of the thing did not take off from the merriment of it, as any of the ridiculous and preposterous disproportions in the diverting travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver.

Under a just impression of the evils which we are sustaining from the principles and the practices of *modern* France, we are apt to lose sight of those deep and lasting mischiefs which so long, so regularly, and so systematically we have been importing from the same country, though in another form and under another government. In one respect, indeed, the first were the more formidable, because we embraced the ruin without suspecting it; while we defeat the malignity of the latter, by detecting the turpitude and defending ourselves against its contagion. This is not the place to descant on that levity of manners, that contempt of the Sabbath, that fatal familiarity with loose principles, and those relaxed notions of conjugal fidelity, which have often been transplanted into this country by women of fashion, as a too common effect of a long residence in a neighbouring nation; but it is peculiarly suitable to my subject to advert to another domestic mischief derived from the same foreign extraction; I mean, the risks that have been run, and the sacrifices which have been made, in order to furnish

our young ladies with the means of acquiring the French language in the greatest possible purity. Perfection in this accomplishment has been so long established as the supreme object, so long considered as the predominant excellence to which all other excellences must bow down, that it would be hopeless to attack a law which fashion has immutably decreed, and which has received the stamp of long prescription. We must, therefore, be contented with expressing a wish, that this indispensable perfection could have been attained at the expense of sacrifices less important. It is with the greater regret I animadvert on this and some other prevailing practices, as they are errors into which the wise and respectable have, through want of consideration, or rather through want of firmness to resist the tyranny of fashion, sometimes fallen. It has not been unusual when mothers of rank and reputation have been asked how they ventured to intrust their daughters to foreigners, of whose principles they knew nothing, except that they were Roman Catholics, to answer, "That they had taken care to be secure on that subject; for that it had been stipulated that *the question of religion should never be agitated between the teacher and the pupil.*" This, it must be confessed, is a most desperate remedy; it is like starving to death, to avoid being poisoned. And who can help trembling for the event of that education, from which religion, as far as the governess is concerned, is thus formally and systematically excluded. Surely it would not be exacting too much, to suggest at least that an attention no less

scrupulous should be exerted to insure the character of our children's instructor, for piety and knowledge, than is thought necessary to ascertain that she has nothing *patois* in her dialect.

I would rate a correct pronunciation and an elegant phraseology at their just price, and I would not rate them low; but I would not offer up piety and principle as victims to sounds and accents. And the matter is now made more easy; for whatever disgrace it might once have brought on an English lady to have had it suspected from her accent that she had the misfortune not to be born in a neighbouring country, some recent events may serve to reconcile her to the suspicion of having been bred in her own. A country, to which, with all its sins, which are many, the whole world is looking up with envy and admiration, as the seat of true glory and of comparative happiness! * A country, in which the exile, driven out by the crimes of his own, finds a home! A country, to obtain the protection of which it was claim enough to be unfortunate; and no impediment to have been the subject of her direst foe! A country, which, in this respect, humbly imitating the Father of compassion, when it offered mercy to a suppliant enemy, never conditioned for merit, never insisted on the virtues of the miserable as a preliminary to its own bounty!

England! with all thy faults I love thee still.

* This was written early in the French Revolution.

CHAP. IV.

COMPARISON OF THE MODE OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE LAST AGE WITH THE PRESENT.

To return, however, to the subject of general education. We admit that a young lady may excel in speaking French and Italian, may repeat a few passages from a volume of extracts; play like a professor, and sing like a syren; have her dressing-room decorated with her own drawings, tables, stands, flower-pots, screens, and cabinets; nay, she may dance like Sempronia* herself, and yet we shall insist that she may have been very badly educated. I am far from meaning to set no value whatever on any or all of these qualifications; they are all of them elegant, and many of them properly tend to the perfecting of a polite education. These things in their measure and degree may be done, but there are others which should not be left undone. Many things are becoming, but "one thing is needful." Besides, as the world seems to be fully apprised of the value of whatever tends to embellish life, there is less occasion here to insist on its importance.

But, though a well-bred young lady may lawfully learn most of the fashionable arts, yet, let me ask, does it seem to be the true end of educa-

* See Catiline's Conspiracy.

tion to make women of fashion *dancers*, *singers*, *players*, *painters*, *actresses*, *sculptors*, *gilders*, *varnishers*, *engravers*, and *embroiderers?* Most *men* are commonly destined to some profession, and their minds are consequently turned each to its respective object. Would it not be strange if they were called out to exercise their profession, or to set up their trade, with only a little general knowledge of the trades and professions of all other men, and without any previous definite application to their own peculiar calling? The profession of ladies to which the bent of *their* instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families. They should be therefore trained with a view to these several conditions, and be furnished with a stock of ideas, and principles, and qualifications, and habits, ready to be applied and appropriated, as occasion may demand, to each of these respective situations. For though the arts which merely embellish life may claim admiration, yet, when a man of sense comes to marry, it is not merely a creature who can paint, and play, and sing, and draw, and dress, and dance; it is a being who can comfort and counsel him; one who can reason, and reflect, and feel, and judge, and discourse, and discriminate; one who can assist him in his affairs, lighten his cares, soothe his sorrows, purify his joys, strenghen his principles, and educate his children.

Almost any ornamental acquirement is a good thing, when it is not the best thing a woman has; and talents are admirable when not made to stand

proxy for virtues. The writer of these pages is intimately acquainted with several ladies, who, excelling most of their sex in the art of music, but excelling them also in prudence and piety, find little leisure or temptation, amidst the delights and duties of a large and lovely family, for the exercise of this charming talent: they regret that so much of their own youth was wasted in acquiring an art which can be turned to so little account in married life, and are now conscientiously restricting their daughters in the portion of time allotted to its acquisition.

Far be it from me to discourage the cultivation of any existing talent; but may it not be questioned of the fond believing mother, whether talents, like the spirits of Owen Glendower, though conjured by parental partiality with ever so loud a voice,

> Yet will they come when you do call for them?

That injudicious practice, therefore, cannot be too much discouraged, of endeavouring to create talents which do not exist in nature. *That their daughters shall learn every thing* is so general a maternal maxim, that even unborn daughters, of whose expected abilities and conjectured faculties, it is presumed, no very accurate judgment can previously be formed, are yet predestined to this universality of accomplishments. This comprehensive maxim, thus almost universally brought into practice, at once weakens the general powers of the mind, by drawing off its strength into too

great a variety of directions; and cuts up time into too many separate portions, by splitting it into such an endless multiplicity of employments. I know that I am treading on tender ground, but I cannot help thinking, that the restless pains we take to cram up every little vacuity of life, by crowding one new thing upon another, rather creates a thirst for novelty than knowledge; and is but a well-disguised contrivance to anticipate the keeping us in after-life more effectually from conversing with ourselves. The care taken to prevent *ennui* is but a creditable plan for promoting self-ignorance. We run from one occupation to another (I speak of those arts to which little intellect is applied), with a view to lighten the pressure of time; above all, we fly to them to save us from our own thoughts; we fly to them to rescue us from ourselves; whereas, were we thrown a little more on our own hands, we might at last be driven, by way of something to do, to try to get a little more acquainted with our own hearts. But it is only one part of the general inconsistency of the human character, that with the person of all others we best love, we least like to converse and to form an intimacy,—I mean ourselves. But though our being less absorbed by this busy trifling, which dignifies its inanity with the imposing name of occupation, might render us somewhat more sensible of the tedium of life; yet might not this very sensation tend to quicken our pursuit of a better? For an awful thought here suggests itself. If life be so long

that we are driven to set at work every engine to pass away the tediousness of time, how shall we do to get rid of the tediousness of eternity, — an eternity in which not one of the acquisitions which life has been exhausted in acquiring will be of the least use? Let not, then, the soul be starved by feeding it on such unsubstantial aliment, for the mind can be no more nourished by these empty husks than the body can be fed with ideas and principles.

Among the boasted improvements of the present age, none affords more frequent matter of peculiar exultation, than the manifest superiority in the employments of the young ladies of our time over those of the good housewives of the last century. It is matter of general triumph that they are at present employed in learning the polite arts, or in acquiring liberal accomplishments; while it is insisted that their forlorn predecessors wore out their joyless days in adorning the mansion-house with hideous hangings of sorrowful tapestry and disfiguring tent-stitch. Most cheerfully do I allow to the reigning modes their just claim of boasted superiority, for certainly there is no piety in bad taste. Still, granting all the deformity of the exploded ornaments, one advantage attended them: the walls and floors were not *vain* of their decorations; and it is to be feared that the little person sometimes is. The flattery bestowed on the obsolete employments, for probably even *they* had their flatterers, furnished less aliment to selfishness, and less gratification to vanity; and the occupation itself was less likely to impair the delicacy

and modesty of the sex, than the exquisite cultivation of personal accomplishments or personal decorations; and every mode which keeps down vanity and keeps back *self*, has at least a moral use. For while we admire the rapid movement of the elegant fingers of a young lady busied in working or painting her ball-dress, we cannot help suspecting that her alacrity may be a little stimulated by the animating idea *how very well she shall look in it.* Nor was the industrious matron of Ithaca more soothed at her solitary loom with the sweet reflection that by her labour she was gratifying her filial and conjugal feelings, than the industrious but pleasure-loving damsel of Britain is gratified by the anticipated admiration which her ingenuity is procuring for her beauty.

Might not this propensity be a little checked, and an interesting feeling be combined with her industry, were the fair artist habituated to exercise her skill in adorning some one else rather than herself? For it will add no lightness to the lightest head, nor vanity to the vainest heart, to solace her labours in reflecting, how exceedingly the gown she is working will become her mother. This suggestion, trifling as it may seem, of habituating young ladies to exercise their taste and devote their leisure, not to the decoration of their own persons, but to the service of those to whom they are bound by every tender tie of love and duty, would not only help to repress vanity, but, by thus associating the idea of industry with that of filial tenderness, would promote, while it gratified,

some of the best affections of the heart. The Romans (and it is mortifying on the subject of Christian education to be driven so often to refer to the superiority of pagans) were so well aware of the importance of keeping up a sense of family fondness and attachment by the very same means which promoted simple and domestic employment, that no citizen of note ever appeared in public in any garb but what was spun by his wife and daughter; and this virtuous fashion was not confined to the early days of republican severity, but even in all the pomp and luxury of imperial power, Augustus preserved in his own family this simplicity of primitive manners.

Let me be allowed to repeat, that I mean not with preposterous praise to descant on the ignorance or the prejudice of past times, nor absurdly to regret that vulgar system of education which rounded the little circle of female acquirements within the limits of the sampler and the receipt-book. Yet if a preference almost exclusive was then given to what was merely useful, a preference almost equally exclusive also is now assigned to what is merely ornamental. And it must be owned, that if the life of a young lady, formerly, too much resembled the life of a confectioner, it now too much resembles that of an actress; the morning is all rehearsal, and the evening is all performance. And those who are trained in this regular routine, who are instructed in order to be exhibited, soon learn to feel a sort of impatience in those societies in which *their* kind of talents

are not likely to be brought into play; the task of an auditor becomes dull to her who has been used to be a performer. Esteem and kindness become but cold substitutes to one who has been fed on plaudits, and pampered with acclamations; and the excessive commendation which the visitor is expected to pay for his entertainment not only keeps alive the flame of vanity in the artist by constant fuel, but is not seldom exacted at a price which a veracity at all strict would grudge. The misfortune is, when a whole circle are obliged to be competitors who shall flatter most, it is not easy to be at once very sincere and very civil. And unfortunately, while the age is become so knowing and so fastidious, that if a young lady does not play like a public performer, no one thinks her worth attending to; yet, if she does so excel, some of the soberest of the admiring circle feel a strong alloy to their pleasure, on reflecting at what a vast expense of time this perfection must probably have been acquired.*

The study of the fine arts, indeed, is forced on young persons, with or without genius, fashion, as was said before, having swallowed up that distinction, to such excess, as to vex, fatigue, and

* That accurate judge of the human heart, Madame de Maintenon, was so well aware of the danger resulting from some kinds of excellence, that after the young ladies of the court of Louis Quatorze had distinguished themselves by the performance of some dramatic pieces of Racine, when her friends told her how admirably they had played their parts; "Yes," answered this wise woman, "so admirably that they shall never play again."

disgust those who have no talents, and to determine them, as soon as they become free agents, to abandon all such tormenting acquirements. While by this incessant compulsion still more pernicious effects are often produced on those who actually possess genius; for the natural constant reference in the mind to that public performance for which they are sedulously cultivating this talent excites the same passions of envy, vanity, and competition in the dilettanti performers, as might be supposed to stimulate professional candidates for fame and profit at public games and theatrical exhibitions. Is this emulation, is this spirit of rivalry, is this hunger after public praise, the temper which prudent parents would wish to excite and foster? Besides, in *any* event the issue is not favourable: if the young performers are timid, they disgrace themselves and distress their friends; if courageous, their boldness offends still more than their bad performance. Shall they then be studiously brought into situations in which failure discredits and success disgusts?

May I venture, without being accused of pedantry, to conclude this chapter with another reference to ancient and pagan examples? The Hebrews, Egyptians, and Greeks believed that they could more effectually teach their youth maxims of virtue, by calling in the aid of music and poetry. These maxims, therefore, they put into verses, and these verses were set to the most popular and simple tunes, which the children sang. Thus was their love of goodness excited by

the very instruments of their pleasure; and the senses, the taste, and the imagination, as it were, pressed into the service of religion and morals. Dare I appeal to Christian parents, if these arts are commonly used by *them*, as subsidiary to religion and to a system of morals much more worthy of every ingenious aid and association, which might tend to recommend them to the youthful mind? Dare I appeal to Christian parents whether music, which fills up no trifling portion of their daughters' time, does not fill it without any moral end, or even without any specific object? Nay, whether some of the favourite songs of polished societies are not amatory, are not Anacreontic, more than quite become the modest lips of innocent youth and delicate beauty?

CHAP. V.

ON THE RELIGIOUS EMPLOYMENT OF TIME. — ON THE MANNER IN WHICH HOLIDAYS ARE PASSED. — SELFISHNESS AND INCONSIDERATION CONSIDERED. — DANGERS ARISING FROM THE WORLD.

THERE are many well-disposed parents, who, while they attend to these fashionable acquirements, do not neglect to infuse religious knowledge into the minds of their children; and having done this, are but too apt to conclude that they have done all, and have fully acquitted themselves of the important duties of education. For having, as they think, sufficiently grounded their daughters in religion, they do not scruple to allow them to spend almost the whole of their time exactly like the daughters of worldly people. Now, though it be one great point gained, to have imbued their young minds with the best knowledge, the work is not, therefore, by any means accomplished. "What do ye more than others?" is a question which, in a more extended sense, religious parents must be prepared to answer.

Such parents should go on to teach children the religious use of time, the duty of consecrating to God every talent, every faculty, every possession, and of devoting their whole lives to his glory. People of piety should be more peculiarly on their guard against a spirit of idleness, and a slovenly

habitual wasting of time; because this practice, by not assuming a palpable shape of guilt, carries little alarm to the conscience. Even religious characters are in danger on this side; for, not allowing themselves to follow the world in its excesses and diversions, they have, consequently, more time upon their hands; and instead of dedicating the time so rescued to its true purposes, they sometimes make, as it were, compensation to themselves for their abstinence from dangerous places of public resort, by an habitual frivolousness at home, by a superabundance of unprofitable small-talk, idle reading, and a quiet and dull frittering away of time. Their day, perhaps, has been more free from actual evil; but it will often be discovered to have been as unproductive as that of more worldly characters; and they will be found to have traded to as little purpose with their Master's talents. But a Christian must take care to keep his conscience peculiarly alive to the unapparent, though formidable perils of unprofitableness.

To these, and to all, the author would earnestly recommend to accustom their children to pass at once from serious business to active and animated recreation: they should carefully preserve them from those long and torpid intervals between both, that languid indolence and spiritless trifling, that merely getting rid of the day without stamping on it any characters of active goodness or of intellectual profit, that inane drowsiness which wears out such large portions of life in both young and old.

It has, indeed, passed into an aphorism, that activity is necessary to virtue, even among those who are not apprised that it is also indispensable to happiness. Yet so far are many parents from being sensible of this truth, that vacations from school are not merely allowed, but appointed, to pass away in wearisome sauntering and indeterminate idleness; and this is done through erring tenderness, by way of converting the holidays into pleasure! Nay, the idleness is specifically made over to the child's mind, as the strongest expression of the fondness of the parent! A dislike to learning is thus systematically excited, by preposterously erecting indolence into a reward for application! and the promise of doing nothing is held out as the strongest temptation, as well as the best recompense, for having done well!

These and such like errors of conduct arise from the latent, but very operative, principle of selfishnes. This principle is obviously promoted by many habits and practices seemingly of little importance; and, indeed, selfishness is so commonly interwoven with vanity and inconsideration, that I have not always thought it necessary to mark the distinction. They are alternately cause and effect, and are produced and reproduced by reciprocal operation; they are a joint confederacy, which are mutually promoting each other's strength and interest; they are united by almost inseparable ties, and the indulgence of either is the gratification of all. Ill-judging tenderness is, in fact, only a concealed self-love, which cannot bear to be wit-

ness to the uneasiness which a present disappointment, or difficulty, or vexation, would cause to a darling child; but which yet does not scruple, by improper gratification, to store up for it future miseries which the child will infallibly suffer, though it may be at a distant period, which the selfish mother does not disturb herself by anticipating, because she thinks she may be saved the pain of beholding.

Another principle, something different from this, though it may properly fall under the head of selfishness, seems to actuate some parents in their conduct towards their children; — I mean, a certain slothfulness of mind, a love of ease, which imposes a voluntary blindness, and makes them not choose to see what will give them trouble to combat. From the persons in question we frequently hear such expressions as these: — "Children will be children;" — "My children, I suppose, are much like those of other people," &c. Thus we may observe this dangerous and delusive principle frequently turning off with a smile from the first indications of those tempers, which, from their fatal tendency, ought to be very seriously taken up. I would be understood now as speaking to conscientious parents, who consider it as a general duty to correct the faults of their children, but who, from this indolence of mind, are extremely backward in *discovering* such faults, and are not very well pleased when they are pointed out by others. Such parents will do well to take notice, that whatever they consider it is a duty to *correct*,

must be equally a duty to endeavour to *find out*. And this indolent love of ease is the more to be guarded against, as it not only leads parents into erroneous conduct towards their children, but is peculiarly dangerous to themselves. It is a fault frequently cherished from ignorance of its real character; for, not bearing on it the strong features of deformity which mark many other vices, but, on the contrary, bearing some resemblance to virtue, it is frequently mistaken for the Christian graces of patience, meekness, and forbearance, than which nothing can be more opposite; these proceeding from the Christian principle of self-denial, the other from self-indulgence.

In this connection may I be permitted to remark on the practice at the tables of many families when the children are at home for the holidays? Every delicacy is forced upon them, with the tempting remark, "that they cannot have this or that dainty at school." They are indulged in irregular hours for the same motive, "because they cannot have that indulgence at school." Thus the natural seeds of idleness, sensuality, and sloth, are at once cherished, by converting the periodical visit at home into a season of intemperance, late hours, and exemption from learning. So that children are habituated, at an age when lasting associations are formed in the mind, to connect the idea of study with that of hardship, of happiness with gluttony, and of pleasure with loitering, feasting, or sleeping. Would it not be better, would it not be kinder, to make them com-

bine the delightful idea of home, with the gratification of the social affections, the fondness of maternal love, the kindness, and warmth, and confidence of the sweet domestic attachments,

> —— And all the charities
> Of father, son, and brother?

I will venture to say, that those listless and vacant days when the thoughts have no precise object; when the imagination has nothing to shape; when industry has no definitive pursuit; when the mind and the body have no exercise, and the ingenuity has no acquisition either to anticipate or to enjoy, are the longest, the dullest, and the least happy, which children of spirit and genius ever pass. Yes! it is a few short but keen and lively intervals of animated pleasure, snatched from between the successive labours and duties of a well-ordered, busy day, looked forward to with hope, enjoyed with taste, and recollected without remorse, which, both to men and to children, yield the truest portions of enjoyment. O snatch your offspring from adding to the number of those objects of supreme commiseration, who seek their happiness in doing nothing! The animal may be gratified by it, but the man is degraded. Life is but a short day; but it is a working day. Activity *may* lead to evil; but inactivity *cannot* be led to good.

Young ladies should also be accustomed to set apart a fixed portion of their time, as sacred to

the poor *, whether in relieving, instructing or working for them; and the performace of this duty must not be left to the event of contingent circumstances, or the operation of accidental impressions; but it must be established into a principle, and wrought into a habit. A specific portion of the day must be allotted to it, on which no common engagement must be allowed to intrench. Those periods of time, which are not *stated*, are seldom turned to their proper use; and nothing short of a regular plan, which must, however, be sometimes made to give way to circumstances, insures the conscientious discharge of any duty. This will help to furnish a powerful remedy for that selfishness whose strong holds (the truth cannot be too often repeated) it is the grand business of Christian education perpetually to attack. If we were but aware how much better it makes ourselves to wish to see others better, and to assist in making them so, we should find that the good done would be of as much im-

* It would be a noble employment, and well becoming the tenderness of their sex, if ladies were to consider the superintendence of the poor as their immediate office. They are peculiarly fitted for it; for from their own habits of life they are more intimately acquainted with domestic wants than the other sex; and in certain instances of sickness and suffering peculiar to themselves, they should be expected to have more sympathy; and they have obviously more leisure. There is a certain religious society, distinguished by simplicity of dress, manners, and language, whose poor are perhaps better taken care of than any other; and one reason may be, that they are immediately under the inspection of the women.

portance by the habit of doing good, which it would induce in our own minds, as by its beneficial effects on the objects of our kindness.*

In what relates to pecuniary bounty it will be requiring of young persons a very small sacrifice, if you teach them merely to give that money to the poor which properly belongs not to the child but to the parent; this sort of charity commonly subtracts little from their own pleasures, especially when what they have bestowed is immediately made up to them as a reward for their little fit of generosity. They will, on this plan, soon learn to give not only for praise but for profit. The sacrifice of an orange to a little girl, or a feather to a great one, given at the expense of their own gratification, would be a better lesson of charity on its right ground, than a considerable sum of money to be presently replaced by the parent. And it would be habituating them early to combine two ideas which ought never to be separated, — charity and self-denial.

As an antidote to selfishness, as well as to pride and indolence, they should also very early be taught to perform all the little offices in their

* In addition to the instruction of the individual poor, and the superintendence of charity schools, ladies might be highly useful in assisting the parochial clergy in the adoption of that excellent plan for the instruction of the ignorant suggested by the Bishop of Durham in his last admirable charge to his clergy. It is with pleasure the author is enabled to add, that the scheme has actually been adopted with good effect in that extensive diocese.

power for themselves: they should be accustomed not to be insolently exercising their supposed prerogative of rank and wealth, by calling for servants where there is no real occasion; above all, they should be accustomed to consider the domestics' hours of meals and rest as almost sacred, and the golden rule should be practically and uniformly enforced, even on so trifling an occasion as ringing a bell through mere wantonness, or self-love, or pride.

To check the growth of inconsiderateness, young ladies should early be taught to discharge their little debts with punctuality. They should be made sensible of the cruelty of obliging tradespeople to call often for the money due to them; and of hindering and detaining those whose time is the source of their subsistence, under pretence of some frivolous engagement, which ought to be made to bend to the comfort and advantage of others. They should conscientiously allow sufficient time for the execution of their orders; and, with a Christian circumspection, be careful not to drive work-people, by needless hurry, into losing their rest, or breaking the Sabbath. I have known a lady give her gown to a mantua-maker on the Saturday night, to whom she would not for the world say, in so many words, "You must work through the whole of Sunday," while she was virtually compelling her to do so, by an injunction to bring the gown home finished on the Monday morning, on pain of her displeasure. To these hardships numbers are continually driven by

good-natured but inconsiderate employers. As these petty exactions of inconsideration furnish also a constant aliment to selfishness, let not a desire to counteract them be considered as leading to too minute details: nothing is too frivolous for animadversion, which tends to fix a bad habit in the superior, or to wound the feelings of the dependant.

Would it not be turning those political doctrines, which are now so warmly agitated, to a truly moral account, and give the best practical answer to the popular declamations, on the inequality of human conditions, were the rich carefully to instruct their children to soften that inevitable inequality by the mildness and tenderness of their behaviour to their inferiors? This dispensation of God, which excites so many sinful murmurs, would, were it thus practically improved, tend to establish the glory of that Being who is now so often charged with injustice; for God himself is covertly attacked in many of the invectives against laws, governments, and the supposed arbitrary and unjust disproportion of ranks and riches.

This dispensation, thus properly improved, would at once call into exercise the generosity, kindness, and forbearance of the superior; and the patience, resignation, and gratitude of the inferior: and thus, while we were vindicating the *ways* of Providence, we should be accomplishing his *plan*, by bringing into action those virtues of both classes, which would have had little exercise

had there been no inequality in station and fortune. Those more exalted persons who are so zealously contending for the privileges of rank and power, should never lose sight of the religious duties and considerate virtues which the possession of rank and power imposes on themselves; duties and virtues which should ever be inseparable from those privileges. As the inferior classes have little real right to complain of *laws* in this respect, let the great be watchful to give them as little cause to complain of *manners*. In order to this, let them carefully train up their children to supply by individual kindness those cases of hardship which laws cannot reach; let them obviate, by an active and well-directed compassion, those imperfections of which the best constructed human institutions must unavoidably partake; and, by the exercise of private bounty, early inculcated, soften those distresses which can never come under the cognisance of even the best government. Let them teach their offspring, that the charity of the rich should ever be subsidiary to the public provision in those numberless instances to which the most equal laws cannot apply. By such means every lesson of politics may be converted into a lesson of piety; and a spirit of condescending love might win over some, whom a spirit of invective will only inflame.

Among the instances of negligence into which even religiously disposed parents and teachers are apt to fall, one is, that they are not sufficiently attentive in finding interesting employment for the

Sunday. They do not make a scruple of sometimes allowing their children to fill up the intervals of public worship with their ordinary employments and common school-exercises. They are not aware that they are training their offspring to an early and a systematic profanation of the Sabbath by this custom; for to children, their tasks are their business; to them a French or Latin exercise is as serious an occupation as the exercise of a trade or profession is to a man; and if they are allowed to think the one right *now*, they will not be brought hereafter to think that the other is wrong; for the opinions and practices fixed at this important season are not easily altered; and an early habit becomes rooted into an inveterate prejudice. By this oversight, even the friends of religion may be contributing eventually to that abolition of the Lord's day, so devoutly wished and so indefatigably laboured after by its enemies, as the desired preliminary to the destruction of whatever is most dear to Christians. What obstruction would it offer to the general progress of youth, if all their Sunday exercises, which, with reading, composing, transcribing, and getting by heart, might be extended to an entertaining variety, were adapted to the peculiar nature of the day?

Those whose own spirits and vigour of mind are exhausted by the amusements of the world, and who, therefore, grow faint and languid under the continuance of serious occupation, are now aware how different the case is with lively young people, whose spring of action has not been broken by

habitual indulgence. They are not aware that a firm and well-disciplined intellect wants, comparatively, little amusement. The mere change from one book to another is a relief almost amounting to pleasure: but then the variation must be judiciously made, so that to novelty must be superadded comparative amusement; that is, the gradation should be made from the more to the less serious book. If care be thus taken that greater exertion of the mental powers shall not be required, when, through length of application, there is less ability or disposition to exert them; such a well-ordered distinction will produce on the mind nearly the same effect as a new employment.

It is not meant to impose on them such rigorous study as shall convert the day they should be taught to love, into a day of burdens and hardships, or to abridge them of such innocent enjoyments as are compatible with a season of holy rest. It is intended merely to suggest that there should be a marked distinction in the nature of their employments and studies: for on the observance or neglect of this, as was before observed, their future notions and principles will in a good degree be formed. The Gospel, in rescuing the Lord's day from the rigorous bondage of the Jewish sabbath, never lessened the obligation to keep it holy, nor meant to sanction any secular occupation.* Christianity, in lightening its austerities, has not defeated

* The strongest proof of this observation is the *conduct* of the first Christians, who had their instructions immediately from the apostles.

the end of its institution; in purifying its spirit, it has not abolished its object.

Though the author, chiefly writing with a view to domestic instruction, has purposely avoided entering on the disputed question, whether a school or home education be best; — a question which, perhaps, must generally be decided by the state of the individual home and the state of the individual school; — yet she begs leave to suggest one remark, which peculiarly belongs to a school-education; namely, the general habit of converting the Sunday into a visiting day, by way of gaining time; as if the appropriate instructions of the Lord's day were the cheapest sacrifice which could be made to pleasure. Even in those schools, in which religion is considered as an indispensable part of instruction, this kind of instruction is almost exclusively limited to Sundays: how then are girls ever to make any progress in this most important article, if they are habituated to lose the religious advantages of the school, for the sake of having more dainties for dinner abroad? This remark cannot be supposed to apply to the visits which children make to religious parents; and, indeed, it only applies to those cases where the school is a conscientious school, and the visit a trifling visit.

Among other subjects which engross a good share of worldly conversation, one of the most attracting is beauty. Many ladies have often a random way of talking rapturously on the general importance and the fascinating power of beauty,

who are yet prudent enough to be very unwilling to let their own daughters find out they are handsome. Perhaps the contrary course might be safer. If the little listener were not constantly hearing that beauty is the best gift, she would not be so vain from fancying herself to be the best gifted. Be less solicitous, therefore, to conceal from her a secret, which, with all your watchfulness, she will be sure to find out, without your telling; but rather seek to lower the general value of beauty in her estimation. Use your daughter in all things to a different standard from that of the world. It is not by vulgar people and servants only that she will be told of her being pretty. She will be hearing it not only from gay ladies, but from grave men; she will be hearing it from the whole world around her. The antidote to the present danger is not now to be searched for; it must be already operating; it must have been provided for in the foundation laid in the general principle she has been imbibing before this particular temptation of beauty came in question. And this general principle is an habitual indifference to flattery. She must have learnt not to be intoxicated by the praise of the world. She must have learnt to estimate things by their intrinsic worth, rather than by the world's estimation. Speak to her with particular kindness and commendation of plain but amiable girls; mention with compassion such as are handsome but ill educated; speak casually of some who were once

thought pretty, but have ceased to be good; make use of the arguments arising from the shortness and uncertainty of beauty, as strong additional reasons for making that which is little valuable in itself, still less valuable. As it is a *new* idea which is always dangerous, you may thus break the force of this danger by allowing her an early introduction to this inevitable knowledge, which would become more interesting, and of course more perilous, by every additional year; and if you can guard against that fatal and almost universal error of letting her see that she is more loved on account of her beauty, her familiarity with the idea may be less dangerous than its novelty afterwards would prove.

But the great and constant peril to which young persons in the higher walks of life are exposed, is the prevailing turn and spirit of general conversation. Even the children of better families, who are well instructed when at their studies, are yet at other times continually beholding the WORLD set up in the highest and most advantageous point of view. Seeing the world! knowing the world! standing well with the world! making a figure in the world! is spoken of as including the whole sum and substance of human advantages. They hear their education almost exclusively alluded to with reference to the *figure* it will enable them to make in the world. In almost all companies they hear all that the world admires spoken of with admiration; rank flattered, fame coveted, power sought, beauty idolized, money considered as the

one thing needful, and as the atoning substitute for the want of all other things: profit held up as the reward of virtue, and wordly estimation as the just and highest prize of laudable ambition; and after the very spirit of the world has been thus habitually infused into them all the week, one cannot expect much effect from their being coldly and customarily told now and then on Sundays, that they must not "love the world, nor the things of the world." To tell them once in seven days that it is a sin to gratify an appetite which you have been whetting and stimulating the preceding six, is to require from them a power of self-control, which our knowledge of the impetuosity of the passions, especially in early age, should have taught us is impossible.

This is not the place to animadvert on the usual misapplication of the phrase, "knowing the world;" which term is commonly applied, in the way of panegyric, to keen, designing, selfish, ambitious men, who study mankind in order to turn them to their own account. But in the true sense of the expression, the sense which Christian parents would wish to impress on their children, *to know the world* is to know its emptiness, its vanity, its futility, and its wickedness. To know it is to despise it, to be on our guard against it; to labour to live above it; and in this view an obscure Christian in a village may be said to know the world better than a hoary courtier or wily politician. For how can they be said to *know* it, who go on to love it, to value it, to be led captive

by its allurements, to give their soul in exchange for its lying promises?

But while so false an estimate is often made in fashionable society of the real value of things; that is, while Christianity does *not* furnish the standard, and human opinion *does;* while the multiplying our desires is considered as a symptom of elegance, though to subdue those desires is the grand criterion of religion; while moderation is beheld as indicating a poorness of spirit, though to that very poverty of spirit the highest promise of the Gospel is assigned; while worldly wisdom is sedulously enjoined by worldly friends, in contradiction to that assertion, "that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God;" while the praise of man is to be anxiously sought in opposition to that assurance, that "The fear of man worketh a snare;" while they are taught all the week, that "The friendship of the world" is the wisest pursuit; and on Sundays that "it is enmity with God;" while these things are so, (and that they are so in a good degree who will undertake to deny?) may we not venture to affirm that a Christian education, though it be not an impossible, is yet a very difficult work?

CHAP. VI.

ON THE EARLY FORMING OF HABITS. — ON THE NECESSITY OF FORMING THE JUDGMENT TO DIRECT THOSE HABITS.

It can never be too often repeated, that one of the great objects of education is the forming of habits. I may be suspected of having recurred too often, though hitherto only incidentally, to this topic. It is, however, a topic of such importance, that it will be useful to consider it somewhat more in detail, as the early forming of right habits on sound principles seems to be one of the grand secrets of virtue and happiness.

The forming of any one good habit seems to be effected rather by avoiding the opposite bad habit, and resisting every temptation to the opposite vice, than by the mere occasional practice of the virtue required. *Humility*, for instance, is less an act than a disposition of mind. It is not so much a single performance of some detached humble deed, as an incessant watchfulness against every propensity to pride. *Sobriety* is not a prominent ostensible thing; it evidently consists in a series of negations, and not of actions. It is a conscientious habit of resisting every incentive to intemperance. — *Meekness* is best attained and exemplified by guarding against every tendency to

anger, impatience, and resentment. — A habit of *attention* and application is formed by early and constant vigilance against a trifling spirit and a wandering mind. — A habit of *industry*, by watching against the blandishments of pleasure, the waste of small portions of time, and the encroachment of small indulgences.

Now, to stimulate us to an earnest desire of working any or all of these habits into the minds of children, it will be of importance to consider what a variety of uses each of them involves.

To take, for example, the case of moderation and temperance. It would seem, to a superficial observer, of no very great importance to acquire a habit of self-denial in respect either to the elegancies of decoration, or to the delicacies of the table, or to the common routine of pleasure; that there can be no occasion for an indifference to luxuries harmless in themselves, and no need of daily moderation in those persons who are possessed of affluence, and to whom, therefore, as the expense is no object, so the forbearance is thought of no importance. Those acts of self-denial, I admit, when contemplated by themselves, appear to be of no great value, yet they assume high importance, if you consider what it is to have, as it were, dried up the spring of only one importunate passion; if you reflect, after any one such conquest is obtained, how easily, comparatively speaking, it is followed up by others.

How much future virtue and self-government, in more important things, may a mother, therefore, be

securing to a child, even should she always remain in as high a situation as she is in when the first foundations of this quality are laying; but should any reverse of fortune take place in the daughter, how much integrity and independence of mind also may be prepared for her, by the early excision of superfluous desires. She, who has been trained to subdue these propensities, will, in all probability, be preserved from running into worthless company merely for the sake of the splendour which may be attached to it. She will be rescued from the temptation to do wrong things, for the sake of enjoyments from which she cannot abstain. She is delivered from the danger of flattering those whom she despises; because her moderate mind and well-ordered desires do not solicit indulgences, which could only be procured by mean compliances. For she will have been habituated to consider the *character* as the leading circumstance of attachment, and the splendour as an accident, which may or may not belong to it; but which, when it does, as it is not a ground of merit in the possessor, so it is not to be the ground of her attachment. The habit of self-control, in small as well as in great things, involves in the aggregate less loss of pleasure than will be experienced by disappointments in the mind habitually yielding itself to the love of present indulgences, whenever those indulgences should be abridged or withdrawn.

She who has been accustomed to have an early habit of restraint exercised over all her appetites and tempers, she who has been used to set bounds

to her desires as a general principle, will have learned to withstand a passion for dress and personal ornaments; and the woman who has conquered this propensity has surmounted one of the most domineering temptations which assail the sex; while this seemingly little circumstance, if neglected and the opposite habit formed, may be the first step to every successive error, and every consequent distress. Those women who are ruined by seduction in the lower classes, and those who are made miserable by ambitious marriages in the higher, will be more frequently found to owe their misery to an ungoverned passion for dress and show, than to motives more apparently bad. An habitual moderation in this article growing out of a pure self-denying principle, and not arising from the affectation of a singularity, which may have more pride in it than others feel in the indulgence of any of the things which this singularity renounces, includes many valuable advantages. Modesty, simplicity, humility, economy, prudence, liberality, charity, are almost inseparably, and not very remotely, connected with an habitual victory over personal vanity and a turn to personal expense. The inferior and less striking virtues are the smaller pearls, which serve to string and connect the great ones.

An early and unremitting zeal in forming the mind to a habit of *attention*, not only produces the outward expression of good breeding, as one of its incidental advantages; but involves, or rather creates, better qualities than itself; while vacancy

97295

and inattention not only produce vulgar manners, but are usually the indication, if not of an ordinary yet of a neglected understanding. To the habitually inattentive, books offer little benefit; company affords little improvement; while a self-imposed attention sharpens observation, and creates a spirit of inspection and enquiry which often lifts a common understanding to a degree of eminence in knowledge, sagacity, and usefulness, which indolent or negligent genius does not always reach. A habit of attention exercises intellect, quickens discernment, multiplies ideas, enlarges the power of combining images and comparing characters, and gives a faculty of picking up improvement from circumstances the least promising; and of gaining instruction from those slight but frequently recurring occasions, which the absent and the negligent turn to no account. Scarcely any thing or person is so unproductive as not to yield some fruit to the attentive and sedulous collector of ideas. But this is far from being the highest praise of such a person; she who early imposes on herself a habit of strict attention to whatever she is engaged in begins to wage early war with wandering thoughts, useless reveries, and that disqualifying train of busy but unprofitable imaginations, by which the idle are occupied, and the absent are absorbed. She who keeps her intellectual powers in action studies with advantage herself, her books, and the world. Whereas they, in whose undisciplined minds vagrant thoughts have been suffered to range without restriction on ordinary occasions, will find they

cannot easily call them home, when wanted to assist in higher duties. Thoughts, which are indulged in habitual wandering, will not be readily restrained in the solemnities of public worship or of private devotion.

But in speaking of the necessary habits, it must be noticed that the habit of unremitting *industry*, which is, indeed, closely connected with those of which we have just made mention, cannot be too early or too sedulously formed. Let not the sprightly and the brilliant reject industry as a plebeian quality, as a quality to be exercised only by those who have their bread to earn, or their fortune to make. But let them respect it, and adopt it as a habit to which many elevated characters have, in a good measure, owed their distinction. The masters in science, the leaders in literature, legislators and statesmen, even apostles and reformers would not, at least in so eminent a degree, have enlightened, converted, and astonished the world, had they not been eminent possessors of this sober and unostentatious quality. It is the quality to which the immortal Newton modestly ascribed his own vast attainments; who, when he was asked by what means he had been enabled to make that successful progress which struck mankind with wonder, replied, that it was not so much owing to any superior strength of genius, as to a habit of patient thinking, laborious attention, and close application. We must, it is true, in this instance, make some deductions for the humility of the speaker. Yet it is not over-rating its value,

to assert that industry is the sturdy and hard-working pioneer, who by persevering labour removes obstructions, overcomes difficulties, clears intricacies, and thus facilitates the march, and aids the victories, of genius.

An exact habit of *economy* is of the same family with the two foregoing qualities; and, like them, is the prolific parent of a numerous offspring of virtues. For want of the early ingrafting of this practice on its only legitimate stock, — a sound principle of integrity, — may we not, in too many instances in subsequent life, almost apply to the fatal effects of domestic profuseness, what Tacitus observes of a lavish profligacy in the expenditure of public money, — that an exchequer which is exhausted by prodigality will probably be replenished by crimes?

Those who are early trained to scrupulous punctuality in the division of time, and an exactness to the hours of their childish business, will have learnt how much the economy of time is promoted by habits of *punctuality* when they shall enter on the more important business of life. By getting one employment cleared away, exactly as the succeeding employment shall have a claim to be despatched, they will learn two things; that one business must not trench on the time which belongs to another business, and to set a value on those odd quarters of an hour, and even minutes, which are so often lost between successive duties, for want of calculation, punctuality, and arrangement.

A habit of *punctuality* is perhaps one of the

earliest which the youthful mind may be made capable of receiving; and it is so connected with truth, with morals, and with the general good government of the mind, as to render it important that it should be brought into exercise on the smallest occasions. But I refrain from enlarging on this point, as it will be discussed in another part of this work.*

It requires perhaps still more sedulity to lay early the first foundation of those interior habits which are grounded on watchfulness against such faults as do not often betray themselves by breaking out into open excesses; and which there would therefore be less discredit in indulging. It should more particularly make a part of the first elements of education, to try to infuse into the mind that particular principle which stands in opposition to those evil tempers to which the individual pupil is more immediately addicted. As it cannot be followed up too closely, so it can hardly be set about too early. May we not borrow an important illustration of this truth from the fabulous hero of the Grecian story? He who was one day to perform exploits which should fill the earth with his renown, began by conquering in his infancy; and it was a preliminary to his delivering the world from monsters in his riper years, that he should set out by strangling the serpents in his cradle.

It must, however, be observed, that diligent care is to be exercised, that, together with the gradual formation of these and other useful *habits*, an

* See Chapter on Definitions.

adequate attention be employed to the forming of the *judgment*; to the framing such a sound constitution of mind as shall supply the power of directing all the faculties of the understanding, and all the qualities of the heart, to keep their proper places and due bounds, to observe their just proportions, and maintain their right station, relation, order, and dependence.

For instance, while the young person's mind is trained to those habits of attention and industry which we have been recommending, great care must be used that her judgment be so enlightened as to enable her to form sound notions with regard to what is really worthy her attentive pursuit, without which discriminating power, application would only be actively misemployed, and ardour and industry would but serve to lead her more widely from the right road of Truth. Without a correct judgment she would be wasting her activity on what was frivolous, or exhausting it on what was mischievous. Without that ardour and activity we have been recommending, she might only be "weaving spiders' webs;" with it, if destitute of judgment, she would be "hatching cockatrices' eggs."

Again, if the judgment be not well informed as to the nature and true ends of temperance, the ill-instructed mind might be led into a superstitious reliance on the merits of self-denial; and resting in the letter of a few outward observances, without any consideration of the spirit of this Christian virtue, might be led to infer that the kingdom of

heaven was the *abstinence* from "meat and drink," and "not peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The same well-ordered judgment will also be required in superintending and regulating the habit of economy; for extravagance being rather a relative than a positive term, the true art of regulating expense is not to proportion it to the fashion, or to the opinion or practice of others, but to our own station and our own circumstances. Aristippus being accused of extravagance by one who was not rich, because he had given six crowns for a small fish, said to him, "Why, what would you have given?" — "Twelve pence," answered the other. — "Then," replied Aristippus, "our economy is equal; for six crowns are no more to me than twelve pence are to you."

It is the more important to enlighten the judgment in this point, because so predominant is the control of custom and fashion, that men of unfixed principle are driven to borrow other people's judgment of them before they can venture to determine whether they themselves are rich or happy. These vain slaves to human opinion do not so often say, How ought I to act? or, What ought I to spend? as, What does the world think I ought to do? What do others think I ought to spend?

There is also a perpetual call for the interference of the judgment in settling the true notion of what *meekness* is, before we can adopt the practice without falling into error. We must apprise those on whose minds we are inculcating this amiable virtue,

of the broad line of distinction between Christian meekness and that well-bred tone and gentle manner which passes current for it in the world. We must teach them, also, to distinguish between an humble opinion of our own ability to judge, and a servile dereliction of truth and principle, in order to purchase the poor praise of indiscriminate compliance and yielding softness. We must lead them to distinguish accurately between honesty and obstinacy, between perseverance and perverseness, between firmness and prejudice. We must convince them that it is not meekness, but baseness, when, through a dishonest dread of offending the prosperous, or displeasing the powerful, we forbear to recommend, or refuse to support, those whom it is our duty to recommend or to support. That it is selfishness and not meekness, when, through fear of forfeiting any portion of our reputation, or risking our own favour with others, we refuse to bear our testimony to suspected worth or discredited virtue. *

* To this criminal timidity, Madame de Maintenon, a woman of parts and piety, sacrificed the ingenious and amiable Racine; whom, while she had taste enough to admire, she had not the generosity to defend, when the royal favour was withdrawn from him. A still darker cloud hangs over her fame, on account of the selfish neutrality she maintained in not interposing her good offices between the resentments of the King and the sufferings of the Huguenots. It is a heavy aggravation of her fault, that she herself had been educated in the faith of these persecuted people.

CHAP. VII.

FILIAL OBEDIENCE NOT THE CHARACTER OF THE AGE. — A COMPARISON WITH THE PRECEDING AGE IN THIS RESPECT. — THOSE WHO CULTIVATE THE MIND ADVISED TO STUDY THE NATURE OF THE SOIL. — UNPROMISING CHILDREN OFTEN MAKE STRONG CHARACTERS. — TEACHERS TOO APT TO DEVOTE THEIR PAINS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO CHILDREN OF PARTS.

AMONG the real improvements of modern times, and they are not a few, it is to be feared that the growth of filial obedience cannot be included. Who can forbear observing, and regretting in a variety of instances, that not only sons but daughters have adopted something of that spirit of independence, and disdain of control, which characterise the times? And is it not too generally obvious that domestic manners are not slightly tinctured with the prevailing hue of public principles? The *rights of man* have been discussed, till we are somewhat wearied with the discussion. To these have been opposed, as the next stage in the progress of illumination, and with more presumption than prudence, the *rights of woman*. It follows, according to the natural progression of human things, that the next influx of that irradiation which our enlighteners are pouring in upon us will illu-

minate the world with grave descants on the *rights of youth*, the *rights of children*, the *rights of babies!*

This revolutionary spirit in families suggests the remark, that among the faults with which it has been too much the fashion of recent times to load the memory of the incomparable Milton, one of the charges brought against his private character (for with his political character we have here nothing to do) has been, that he was so severe a father as to have compelled his daughters, after he was blind, to read aloud to him, for his sole pleasure, Greek and Latin authors of which they did not understand a word. But this, is in fact, nothing more than an instance of the strict domestic regulations of the age in which Milton lived; and should not be brought forward as a proof of the severity of his individual temper. Nor, indeed, in any case should it ever be considered as a hardship for an affectionate child to amuse an afflicted parent, even though it should be attended with a heavier sacrifice of her own pleasure than that produced in the present instance.*

* In spite of this too prevailing spirit, and at a time when, by an inverted state of society, sacrifices of ease and pleasure are rather exacted by children from parents, than required of parents from children, numberless instances might be adduced of filial affection truly honourable to the present period. And the author records with pleasure, that she has seen amiable young ladies of high rank conducting the steps of a blind but illustrious parent with true filial fondness; and has often contemplated, in another family, the interesting attentions of daughters who were both hands and eyes to an infirm and nearly blind father. It is but justice to repeat that

Is the author then inculcating the harsh doctrine of paternal austerity? By no means. Severity drives the gentle spirit to artifice, and the rugged to despair. It generates deceit and cunning, the most hopeless and hateful in the whole catalogue of female failings. Ungoverned anger in the teacher, and inability to discriminate between venial errors and premeditated offence, though they may lead a timid creature to hide wrong tempers, or to conceal bad actions, will not help her to subdue the one or to correct the other. The dread of severity will drive terrified children to seek, not for reformation, but for impunity. A readiness to forgive them promotes frankness; and we should, above all things, encourage them to be frank, in order to come at their faults. They have not more faults for being open, they only *discover* more; and to know the worst of the character we have to regulate, will enable us to make it better.

Discipline, however, is not cruelty, and restraint is not severity. A discriminating teacher will appreciate the individual character of each pupil, in order to appropriate her management. We must strengthen the feeble, while we repel the bold. We cannot educate by a *receipt*; for, after studying the best rules, and after digesting them into the best system, much must depend on contingent circumstances; for that which is good may yet be in-

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these examples are not taken from that middle rank of life in which Milton lived, but from the daughters of the highest officers in the state.

applicable. The cultivator of the human mind must, like the gardener, study diversities of soil, or he may plant diligently and water faithfully with little fruit. The skilful labourer knows that even where the surface is not particularly promising, there is often found a rough strong ground which will amply repay the trouble of breaking it up; yet we are often most taken with a soft surface, though it conceal a shallow depth, because it promises present reward and little trouble. But strong and pertinacious tempers, of which, perhaps, obstinacy is the leading vice, under skilful management often turn out steady and sterling characters; while from softer clay a firm and vigorous virtue is but seldom produced. Pertinacity is often principle, which wants nothing but to be led to its true object; while the uniformly yielding, and universally accommodating spirit is not seldom the result of a feeble tone of morals, of a temper eager for praise and acting for reward.

But these revolutions in character cannot be effected by mere education. Plutarch has observed, that the medical science would never be brought to perfection till poisons should be converted into physic. What our late improvers in natural science have done in the medical world, by converting the most deadly ingredients into instruments of life and health, Christianity, with a sort of divine alchymy, has effected in the moral world, by that transmutation which makes those passions which have been working for sin become active in the cause of religion. The violent temper of Saul

of Tarsus, which was "exceedingly mad" against the saints of God, did God see fit to convert into that burning zeal which enabled Paul the Apostle to labour so unremittingly for the conversion of the Gentile world. Christianity, indeed, does not so much give us new affections or faculties, as give a new direction to those we already have. She changes that sorrow of the world which worketh death into "godly sorrow which worketh repentance." She changes our anger against the persons we dislike into hatred of their sins. "The fear of man which worketh a snare," she transmutes into "that fear of God which worketh salvation." That religion does not extinguish the passions, but only alters their object, the animated expressions of the fervid Apostle confirm:—"Yea, what *fearfulness*; yea, what *clearing of yourselves*; yea, what *indignation*; yea, what *fear*; yea, what *vehement desire*; yea, what *zeal*; yea, what *revenge*." *

Thus, by some of the most troublesome passions of our nature being converted by the blessing of God on a religious education to the side of virtue, a double purpose is effected. Because, it is the character of the passions never to observe a neutrality. If they are no longer rebels, they become auxiliaries; and the accession of strength is doubled, because a foe subdued is an ally obtained. For it is the effect of religion on the passions, that when she seizes the enemy's garrison, she does not content herself with defeating its future mischiefs, she does not destroy the works, she does not burn the

* 2 Corinthians, vii. 11.

arsenal, and spike the cannon; but the artillery she seizes, she turns to her own use; she attacks in her turn, and plants its whole force against the enemy from whom she has taken it.

But while I would deprecate harshness, I would enforce discipline; and that not merely on the ground of religion but of happiness also. One reason, not seldom brought forward by tender but mistaken mothers, as an apology for their unbounded indulgence, especially to weakly children, is, that they probably will not live to enjoy the world when grown up, and that, therefore, they would not abridge the little pleasure they may enjoy at present, lest they should be taken out of the world without having tasted any of its delights. But a slight degree of observation would prove that this is an error in judgment as well as in principle. For, omitting any considerations respecting their future welfare, and entering only into their immediate interests, it is an indisputable fact that children who know no control, whose faults encounter no contradiction, and whose humours experience constant indulgence, grow more irritable and capricious, invent wants, create desires, lose all relish for the pleasures which they know they may reckon upon; and become, perhaps, more miserable than even those unfortunate children, who labour under the more obvious and more commiserated misfortune of suffering under the tyranny of unkind parents.

An early habitual restraint is peculiarly important to the future character and happiness of

women. A judicious, unrelaxing, but steady and gentle curb on their tempers and passions can alone insure their peace and establish their principles. It is a habit which cannot be adopted too soon, nor persisted in too pertinaciously. They should when very young be inured to contradiction. Instead of hearing their *bon mots* treasured up and repeated till the guests are tired, and till the children begin to think it dull, when they themselves are not the little heroines of the tale, they should be accustomed to receive but moderate praise for their vivacity or their wit, though they should receive just commendation for such qualities as have more worth than splendour.

Patience, diligence, quiet, and unfatigued perseverance, industry, regularity, and economy of time, — as these are the dispositions I would labour to excite, so these are the qualities I would warmly commend. So far from admiring genius, or extolling its prompt effusions, I would rather intimate that excellence, to a certain degree, is in the power of every competitor; that it is the vanity of over-valuing herself for supposed original powers, and slackening exertion in consequence of that vanity, which often leaves the lively ignorant, and the witty superficial. A girl who overhears her mother tell the company that she is a genius, and is so quick, that she never thinks of applying to her task till a few minutes before she is to be called to repeat it, will acquire such a confidence in her own abilities, that she will be advancing in conceit, as she is falling short in knowledge.

Whereas, if she were made to suspect that her want of application rather indicated a deficiency than a superiority in her understanding, she would become industrious in proportion as she became modest; and by thus adding the diligence of the humble to the talents of the ingenious, she might really attain a degree of excellence, which mere quickness of parts, too lazy because too proud to apply, seldom attains."

Girls should be led to distrust their own judgment; they should learn not to murmur at expostulation; they should be accustomed to expect and to endure opposition. It is a lesson with which the world will not fail to furnish them; and they will not practise it the worse for having learnt it the sooner. It is of the last importance to their happiness, even in this life, that they should early acquire a submissive temper and a forbearing spirit. They must even endure to be thought wrong sometimes, when they cannot but feel they are right. And while they should be anxiously aspiring to do well, they must not expect always to obtain the praise of having done so. But while a gentle demeanour is inculcated, let them not be instructed to practise gentleness merely on the low ground of its being decorous, and feminine, and pleasing, and calculated to attract human favour: but let them be carefully taught to cultivate it on the high principle of obedience to Christ; on the practical ground of labouring after conformity to HIM, who, when he proposed himself as a perfect pattern of imitation, did not say, Learn

of me, for I am great, or wise, or mighty, but "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly;" and who graciously promised that the reward should accompany the practice, by encouragingly adding, "and ye shall find rest to your souls." Do not teach them humility on the ordinary ground that vanity is *unamiable*, and that no one will *love* them if they are proud; for that will only go to correct the exterior, and make them soft and smiling hypocrites. But inform them, that "God resisteth the proud," while "them that are meek he shall guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them shall he teach his way." In these, as in all other cases, an habitual attention to the *motives* should be carefully substituted in their young hearts, in the place of too much anxiety about the *event* of actions. Principles, aims, and intentions should be invariably insisted on, as the only true ground of right practice; and they should be carefully guarded against too much solicitude for that human praise, which attaches to appearances as much as to realities, to success more than to desert.

Let me repeat, without incurring the censure of tautology, that it will be of vast importance not to let slip the earliest occasions of working gentle manners into a habit on their only true foundation, Christian meekness. For this purpose I would again urge your calling in the example of our Redeemer in aid of his precepts. Endeavour to make your pupil feel that all the wonders exhibited in his life do not so overwhelm the awakened

heart with rapture, love, and astonishment, as the perpetual instances of his humility and meekness, with which the Gospel abounds. Stupendous miracles, exercises of infinite power, prompted by infinite mercy, are actions which we should naturally enough conceive as growing out of omnipotence and divine perfection: but silence under cruel mockings, patience under reproach, gentleness of demeanour under unparalleled injuries; these are perfections of which unassisted nature not only has no conception in a Divine Being, but at which it would revolt, had not the reality been exemplified by our perfect pattern. Healing the sick, feeding the multitude, restoring the blind, raising the dead, are deeds of which we could form some adequate idea, as necessarily flowing from Almighty Power; but to wash his disciples' feet, to preach the Gospel to the *poor*, to renounce not only ease, for that heroes have done on human motives; but to renounce praise, to forgive his persecutors, to love his enemies, to pray for his murderers with his last breath; these are things, which, while they compel us to cry out with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God," should remind us, also, that they are not only *adorable* but *imitable* parts of his character. These are not speculative and barren doctrines which he came to preach to Christians, but living duties which he meant to entail on them; symbols of their profession; tests of their discipleship. These are perfections which we are not barely to contemplate with holy awe and distant admiration,

as if they were restricted to the *divine* nature of our Redeemer; but we must consider them as suited to the human nature also, which he condescended to participate. In *contemplating*, we must *imitate*; in admiring, we must practise; and in our measure and degree go and do likewise. Elevate your thoughts for one moment to this standard (and you should never allow yourself to be contented with a lower), and then go, if you can, and teach your children to be mild, and soft, and gentle, on worldly grounds, on human motives, as an external attraction, as a decoration to their sex, as an appendage to their rank, as an expression of their good breeding.

There is a custom among teachers, which is not the more right for being common; they are apt to bestow an undue proportion of pains on children of the best capacity, as if only geniuses were worthy of attention. They should reflect that in moderate talents, carefully cultivated, we are perhaps to look for the chief happiness and virtue of society. If superlative genius had been generally necessary, its existence would not have been so rare; for Omnipotence could easily have made those talents common which we now consider as extraordinary, had they been necessary to the perfection of his plan. Besides, while we are conscientiously instructing children of moderate capacity, it is a comfort to reflect, that if no labour will raise them to a high degree in the scale of intellectual distinction, yet they may be led on to perfection in that road in which "a way-faring man, though simple,

shall not err." And when a mother feels disposed to repine that her family is not likely to exhibit a group of future wits and growing beauties, let her console herself by looking abroad into the world, where she will quickly perceive that the monopoly of happiness is not engrossed by beauty, nor that of virtue by genius.

Perhaps mediocrity of parts was decreed to be the ordinary lot, by way of furnishing a stimulus to industry, and strengthening the motives to virtuous application. For is it not obvious that moderate abilities, carefully carried to that measure of perfection of which they are capable, often enables their possessors to outstrip, in the race of knowledge and of usefulness, their more brilliant but less persevering competitors? It is with mental endowments, as with other rich gifts of Providence; the inhabitant of the luxuriant southern climes, where nature has done every thing in the way of vegetation, indolently lays hold on this very plea of fertility which should animate his exertions, as a reason for doing nothing himself; so that the soil, which teems with such encouraging abundance, leaves the favoured possessor idle, and comparatively poor; while the native of the less genial region, supplying by his labours the deficiencies of his lot, overtakes his more favoured competitor: by substituting industry for opulence, he improves the riches of his native land beyond that which is blessed with warmer suns, and thus vindicates Providence from the charge of partial distribution.

A girl who has docility will seldom be found to

want understanding sufficient for all the purposes of a useful, a happy, and a pious life. And it is as wrong for parents to set out with too sanguine a dependence on the figure their children are to make in life, as it is unreasonable to be discouraged at every disappointment. Want of success is so far from furnishing a motive for relaxing their energy, that it is a reason for redoubling it. Let them suspect their own plans, and reform them; let them distrust their own principles, and correct them. The generality of parents do too little; some do much, and miss their reward, because they look not to any strength beyond their own: after much is done, much will remain undone; for the entire regulation of the heart and affections is not the work of education alone, but is effected by the operation of divine grace. Will it be accounted enthusiasm to suggest, "that the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous *parent* availeth much?" and to observe, that perhaps the reason why so many anxious mothers fail of success is, because they repose with confidence in their own skill and labour, neglecting to look to HIM without whose blessing they do but labour in vain.

On the other hand, is it not to be feared that some pious parents have fallen into an error of an opposite kind? From a full conviction that human endeavours are vain, and that it is God alone who can change the heart, they are earnest in their prayers, but not so earnest in their endeavours. Such parents should be reminded, that if they do not add their exertions to their

prayers, their children are not likely to be more benefited than the children of those who do not add their prayers to their exertions. What God has joined, let not man presume to separate. It *is* the work of God, we readily acknowledge, to implant religion in the heart, and to maintain it there as a ruling principle of conduct. And is it not the same God which causes the corn to grow? are not our natural lives constantly preserved by his power? who will deny that in Him we live, and move, and have our being? But how are these works of God carried on? By *means* which he has appointed. By the labour of the husbandman the corn is made to grow; by food the body is sustained; and by religious instruction God is pleased to work upon the human heart. But unless we diligently plough, and sow, and weed, and manure, have we any right to depend on the refreshing showers and ripening suns of heaven for the blessing of an abundant harvest? As far as *we* see of the ways of God, all his works are carried on by *means*. It becomes, therefore, our duty to use the means, and trust in God; to remember that God will not work without the means; and that the means can effect nothing without his blessing. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God must give the increase." But to what does he give the increase? To the *exertions* of Paul and Apollos. It is never said, because God only can give the increase, that Paul and Apollos may spare their labour.

It is one grand object to give the young proba-

tioner just and sober views of the world on which she is about to enter. Instead of making her bosom bound at the near prospect of emancipation from her instructors; instead of teaching her young heart to dance with premature flutterings as the critical winter draws near in which *she is to come out*; instead of raising a tumult in her busy imagination at the approach of her first *grown-up ball*, an event held out as forming the first grand epocha of female life, as the period from which a fresh computation, fixing the pleasures and independence of womanhood, is to be dated; instead of this, endeavour to convince her, that the world will not turn out to be that scene of unvarying and never-ending delights which she has, perhaps, been led to expect, not only from the sanguine temper and warm spirits natural to youth, but from the value she has seen put on those showy accomplishments, which have too probably been fitting her for her exhibition in life. Teach her that this world is not a stage for the display of superficial or even of shining talents, but for the strict and sober exercise of fortitude, temperance, meekness, faith, diligence, and self-denial; of her due performance of which Christian graces, angels will be the spectators, and God the judge. Teach her that human life is not a splendid romance, spangled over with brilliant adventures, and enriched with extraordinary occurrences, and diversified with wonderful incidents; lead her not to expect that it will abound with scenes which will call extraordinary qualities and wonderful powers into perpe-

tual action; and for which if she acquit herself well she will be rewarded with proportionate fame and certain commendation. But apprise her that human life is a true history, many passages of which will be dull, obscure, and uninteresting, some perhaps tragical; but that whatever gay incidents and pleasing scenes may be interspersed in the progress of the piece, yet finally "one event happeneth to all:" to all there is one awful and infallible catastrophe. Apprise her that the estimation which mankind forms of merit is not always just, nor is its praise very exactly proportioned to desert; tell her that the world weighs actions in far different scales from "the balance of the sanctuary," and estimates worth by a far different standard from that of the Gospel. Apprise her that while her purest intentions may be sometimes calumniated, and her best actions misrepresented, she will, on the other hand, be liable to receive commendation on occasions wherein her conscience will tell her she has not deserved it; and that she may be extolled by others for actions for which, if she be honest, she will condemn herself.

Do not, however, give her a gloomy and discouraging picture of the world, but rather seek to give her a just and sober view of the part she will have to act in it. And restrain the impetuosity of hope, and cool the ardour of expectation, by explaining to her, that this part, even in her best estate, will probably consist in a succession of petty trials, and a round of quiet duties, which, if well performed, though they will make little or no

figure in the book of fame, will prove of vast importance to her in that day when *another* "book" is opened, and the judgment is set, and every one will be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad."

Say not that these just and sober views will cruelly wither her young hopes, blast her budding prospects, and deaden the innocent satisfactions of life. It is not true: there is, happily, an active spring in the mind of youth which bounds with fresh vigour and uninjured elasticity from any such temporary depression. It is not meant that you should darken her prospect, so much as that you should enlighten the eyes of her understanding to contemplate it; and, though her feelings, tastes, and passions, will all be against you, if you set before her a faithful delineation of life, yet it will be something to get her judgment on your side. It is no unkind office to assist the short view of youth with the aids of long-sighted experience; to enable them to discover spots in the brightness of that world which dazzles them in prospect, though it is probable they will, after all, choose to believe their own eyes rather than the offered glass.

CHAP. VIII.

ON FEMALE STUDY, AND INITIATION INTO KNOWLEDGE.—ERROR OF CULTIVATING THE IMAGINATION TO THE NEGLECT OF THE JUDGMENT.—BOOKS OF REASONING RECOMMENDED.

As this little work by no means assumes the character of a general scheme of education, the author has purposely avoided expatiating largely on any kind of instruction, but as it happens to be connected, either immediately or remotely, with objects of a moral or religious nature. Of course, she has been so far from thinking it necessary to enter into the enumeration of those popular books which are used in general instruction, that she has purposely forborne to mention any. With such books the rising generation is far more copiously and ably furnished than any that has preceded it; and, out of an excellent variety, the judicious instructor can hardly fail to make such a selection as shall be beneficial to the pupil.

But while due praise ought not to be withheld from the improved methods of communicating the elements of general knowledge, yet is there not some danger that our very advantages may lead us into error, by causing us to repose so confidently on the multiplied helps which facilitate the entrance into learning, as to render our pupils superficial

through the very facility of acquirement? Where so much is done for them, may they not be led to do too little for themselves? and besides that exertion may slacken for want of a spur, may there not be a moral disadvantage in possessing young persons with the notion that learning may be acquired without diligence, and knowledge be attained without labour? Sound education never *can* be made a "primrose-path of dalliance." Do what we will we cannot *cheat* children into learning, or *play* them into knowledge, according to the conciliating smoothness of the modern creed, and the selfish indolence of modern habits. There is no idle way to any acquisitions which really deserve the name. And as Euclid, in order to repress the impetuous vanity of greatness, told his sovereign that there was no royal way to geometry, so the fond mother may be assured that there is no short cut to any other kind of learning; no privileged bye-path cleared from the thorns and briars of repulse and difficulty, for the accommodation of opulent inactivity or feminine weakness. The tree of knowledge, as a punishment, perhaps, for its having been at first unfairly tasted, cannot now be climbed without difficulty; and this very circumstance serves afterwards to furnish not only literary pleasures, but moral advantages. For the knowledge which is acquired by unwearied assiduity is lasting in the possession, and sweet to the possessor; both, perhaps, in proportion to the cost and labour of the acquisition. And though an abler teacher ought to endeavour, by improving the communicating faculty

in himself (for many know what they cannot teach), to soften every difficulty; yet, in spite of the kindness and ability with which he will smooth every obstruction, it is probably among the wise institutions of Providence that great difficulties should still remain. For education is but an initiation into that life of trial to which we are introduced on our entrance into this world. It is the first breaking-in to that state of toil and labour to which we are born, and to which sin has made us liable; and in this view of the subject the pains taken in the acquisition of learning may be converted to higher uses than such as are purely literary.

Will it not be ascribed to a captious singularity, if I venture to remark that real knowledge and real piety, though they may have gained in many instances, have suffered in others from that profusion of little, amusing, sentimental books with which the youthful library overflows? Abundance has its dangers as well as scarcity. In the first place, may not the multiplicity of these alluring little works increase the natural reluctance to those more dry and uninteresting studies, of which, after all, the rudiments of every part of learning *must* consist? And, secondly, is there not some danger (though there are many honourable exceptions) that some of those engaging narratives may serve to infuse into the youthful heart a sort of spurious goodness, a confidence of virtue, a parade of charity? And that the benevolent actions with the recital of which they abound, when they are not made to flow from any source but *feeling*, may tend

to inspire a self-complacency, a self-gratulation, a "stand by, for I am holier than thou?" May not the success with which the good deeds of the little heroes are uniformly crowned; the invariable reward which is made the instant concomitant of well-doing, furnish the young reader with false views of the condition of life, and the nature of the divine dealings with men? May they not help to suggest a false standard of morals, to infuse a love of popularity and an anxiety for praise, in the place of that simple and unostentatious rule of doing whatever good we do, *because it is the will of God?* The universal substitution of this principle would tend to purify the worldly morality of many a popular little story. And there are few dangers which good parents will more carefully guard against than that of giving their children a mere political piety; that sort of religion which just goes to make people more respectable, and to stand well with the world; a religion which is to save appearances without inculcating realities; a religion which affects to "preach peace and good will to men," but which forgets to give "glory to God in the highest."*

There is a certain precocity of mind which is much helped on by these superficial modes of in-

* An ingenious (and in many respects useful) French Treatise on Education has too much encouraged this political piety,—by considering religion as a thing of human convention, rather than of divine institution; as a thing creditable, rather than commanded; by erecting the doctrine of expediency in the room of Christian simplicity; and wearing away the spirit of truth, by the substitution of occasional deceit, equivocation, subterfuge, and mental reservation.

struction; for frivolous reading will produce its correspondent effect, in much less time than books of solid instruction; the imagination being liable to be worked upon, and the feelings to be set a going, much faster than the understanding can be opened and the judgment enlightened. A talent for conversation should be the result of instruction, not its precursor: it is a golden fruit when suffered to ripen gradually on the tree of knowledge; but if forced in the hot-bed of a circulating library, it will turn out worthless and vapid in proportion as it was artificial and premature. Girls who have been accustomed to devour a multitude of frivolous books, will converse and write with a far greater appearance of skill, as to style and sentiment, at twelve or fourteen years old, than those of a more advanced age, who are under the discipline of severer studies; but the former having early attained to that low standard which had been held out to them, become stationary; while the latter, quietly progressive, are passing through just gradations to a higher strain of mind; and those who early begin with talking and writing like women, commonly end with thinking and acting like children.

I would not, however, prohibit such works of imagination as suit this early period. When moderately used, they serve to stretch the faculties and expand the mind; but I should prefer works of vigorous genius and pure unmixed fable to many of those tame and more affected moral stories, which are not grounded on Christian principle. I should

suggest the use, on the one hand, of original and acknowledged fictions; and, on the other, of accurate and simple facts; so that truth and fable may ever be kept separate and distinct in the mind. There is something that kindles fancy, awakens genius, and excites new ideas in many of the bold fictions of the East. And there is one peculiar merit in the Arabian and some other Oriental tales, which is, that they exhibit striking, and, in many respects, faithful views of the manners, habits, customs, and religion of their respective countries; so that some tincture of real local information is acquired by the perusal of the wildest fable, which will not be without its uses in aiding the future associations of the mind in all that relates to Eastern history and literature.

The irregular fancy of women is not sufficiently subdued by early application, nor tamed by labour, and the kind of knowledge they commonly do acquire is easily attained; and being chiefly some slight acquisition of the memory, something which is given them to get off by themselves, and not grounded in their minds by comment and conversation, it is easily lost. The superficial *question*-and-*answer* way, for instance, in which they often learn history, furnishes the mind with little to lean on: the events being detached and separated, the actions having no links to unite them with each other; the characters not being interwoven by mutual relation; the chronology being reduced to disconnected dates, instead of presenting an unbroken series; of course, neither events, actions,

characters, nor chronology, fasten themselves on the understanding, but rather float in the memory as so many detached episodes, than contribute to form the mind and to enrich the judgment of the reader, in the important science of men and manners.

The swarms of *Abridgments*, *Beauties*, and *Compendiums*, which form too considerable a part of a young lady's library, may be considered, in many instances, as an infallible receipt for making a superficial mind. The *names* of the renowned characters in history thus become familiar in the mouths of those who can neither attach to the ideas of the person the series of his actions, nor the peculiarities of his character. A few fine passages from the poets (passages, perhaps, which derived their chief beauty from their position and connection) are huddled together by some extract-maker, whose brief and disconnected patches of broken and discordant materials, while they inflame young readers with the vanity of reciting, neither fill the mind nor form the taste; and it is not difficult to trace back to their shallow sources the hackneyed quotations of certain *accomplished* young ladies, who will be frequently found not to have come legitimately by any thing they know. I mean, not to have drawn it from its true spring, the original works of the author from which some *beauty-monger* has severed it. Human inconsistency in this, as in other cases, wants to combine two irreconcilable things: it strives to unite the reputation of knowledge with the pleasures of idleness, forgetting

that nothing that is valuable can be obtained without sacrifices, and that, if we would purchase knowledge, we must pay for it the fair and lawful price of time and industry. For this *extract-reading*, while it accommodates itself to the convenience, illustrates the character, of the age in which we live. The appetite for pleasure, and that love of ease and indolence which is generated by it, leave little time or taste for sound improvement; while the vanity, which is equally a characteristic of the existing period, puts in its claim also for indulgence, and contrives to figure away by these little snatches of ornamental reading, caught in the short intervals of successive amusements.

Besides, the taste, thus pampered with delicious morsels, is early vitiated. The young reader of these *clustered beauties* conceives a disrelish for every thing which is plain, and grows impatient, if obliged to get through those equally necessary though less showy parts of a work, in which, perhaps, the author gives the best proof of his judgment by keeping under that occasional brilliancy and incidental ornament, of which these superficial students are in constant pursuit. In all well-written books, there is much that is good which is not dazzling; and these shallow critics should be taught, that it is for the embellishment of the more tame and uninteresting parts of his work, that the judicious poet commonly reserves those flowers, whose beauty is defaced when they are plucked from the garland into which he had so skilfully woven them.

The remark, however, as far as it relates to

abridgments, is by no means of general application: there are many valuable works, which, from their bulk, would be almost inaccessible to a great number of readers, and a considerable part of which may not be generally useful. Even in the best written books there is often superfluous matter; authors are apt to get enamoured of their subject, and to dwell too long on it: every person cannot find time to read a longer work on any subject, and yet it may be well for them to know something on almost every subject; those, therefore, who abridge voluminous works judiciously, render service to the community. But there seems, if I may venture the remark, to be a mistake in the *use* of abridgments. They are put systematically into the hands of *youth*, who have, or ought to have, leisure for the works at large; while abridgments seem more immediately calculated for persons in more advanced life, who wish to recall something they had forgotten; who want to restore old ideas rather than acquire new ones; or they are useful for persons immersed in the business of the world, who have little leisure for voluminous reading: they are excellent to refresh the mind, but not competent to form it: they serve to bring back what had been formerly known, but do not supply a fund of knowledge.

Perhaps there is some analogy between the mental and bodily conformation of women. The instructor, therefore, should imitate the physician. If the latter prescribe bracing medicines for a body of which delicacy is the disease, the former

would do well to prohibit relaxing reading for a mind which is already of too soft a texture, and should strengthen its feeble tone by invigorating reading.

By softness, I cannot be supposed to mean imbecility of understanding, but natural softness of heart, and pliancy of temper, together with that indolence of spirit which is fostered by indulging in seducing books, and in the general habits of fashionable life.

I mean not *here* to recommend books which are immediately religious, but such as exercise the reasoning faculties, teach the mind to get acquainted with its own nature, and to stir up its own powers. Let not a timid young lady start if I should venture to recommend to her, after a proper course of preparatory reading, to swallow and digest such strong meat as Watts's or Duncan's little book of Logic, some parts of Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and Bishop Butler's Analogy. Where there is leisure, and capacity, and an able friend to comment and to counsel, works of this nature might be profitably substituted in the place of so much English Sentiment, French Philosophy, Italian Love-Songs, and fantastic German imagery and magic wonders. While such enervating or absurd books sadly disqualify the reader for solid pursuit or vigorous thinking, the studies here recommended would act upon the constitution of the mind as a kind of alterative, and, if I may be allowed the expression, would help to brace the intellectual stamina.

This suggestion is, however, by no means intended to exclude works of taste and imagination, which must always make the ornamental part, and of course a very considerable part of female studies. It is only intimated, that they should not form them entirely and exclusively. For what is called dry tough reading, independent of the knowledge it conveys, is useful as a habit, and wholesome as an exercise. Serious study serves to harden the mind for more trying conflicts; it lifts the reader from sensation to intellect; it abstracts her from the world and its vanities; it fixes a wandering spirit and fortifies a weak one; it divorces her from matter; it corrects that spirit of trifling which she naturally contracts from the frivolous turn of female conversation and the petty nature of female employments; it concentrates her attention, assists her in a habit of excluding trivial thoughts, and thus even helps to qualify her for religious pursuits. Yes, I repeat it, there is to woman a Christian use to be made of sober studies; while books of an opposite cast, however unexceptionable, they may be sometimes found in point of expression, however free from evil in its more gross and palpable shapes, yet from their very nature and constitution they excite a spirit of relaxation, by exhibiting scenes and suggesting ideas which soften the mind and set the fancy at work: they take off wholesome restraints, diminish sober-mindedness, impair the general powers of resistance, and at best feed habits of improper indulgence, and nourish a vain

and visionary indolence, which lays the mind open to error and the heart to seduction.

Women are little accustomed to close reasoning on any subject; still less do they inure their minds to consider particular parts of a subject: they are not habituated to turn a truth round, and view it in all its varied aspects and positions; and this, perhaps, is one cause (as will be observed in another * place) of the too great confidence they are disposed to place in their own opinions. Though their imagination is already too lively, and their judgment naturally incorrect; in educating them we go on to stimulate the imagination, while we neglect the regulation of the judgment. They already want ballast, and we make their education consist in continually crowding more sail than they can carry. Their intellectual powers being so little strengthened by exercise, makes every petty business appear a hardship to them; whereas serious study would be useful, were it only that it leads the mind to the habit of conquering difficulties. But it is peculiarly hard to turn at once from the indolent repose of light reading, from the concerns of mere animal life, the objects of sense, or the frivolousness of female chit-chat; it is peculiarly hard, I say, to a mind so softened, to rescue itself from the dominion of self-indulgence, to resume its powers, to call home its scattered strength, to shut out every foreign intrusion, to force back a spring so unnaturally bent, and to devote itself to religious reading,

* Chapter on Conversation.

to active business, to sober reflection, to self-examination. Whereas to an intellect accustomed to think at all, the difficulty of thinking seriously is obviously lessened.

Far be it from me to desire to make scholastic ladies or female dialecticians; but there is little fear that the kind of books here recommended, if thoroughly studied, and not superficially skimmed, will make them pedants, or induce conceit; for by showing them the possible powers of the human mind, you will bring them to see the littleness of their own: and surely to get acquainted with the mind, to regulate, to inform it; to show it its own ignorance and its own weakness, does not seem the way to puff it up. But let her who is disposed to be elated with her literary acquisitions check the rising vanity by calling to mind the just remark of Swift, "that after all her boasted acquirements, a woman will, generally speaking, be found to possess less of what is called learning than a common school-boy."

Neither is there any fear that this sort of reading will convert ladies into authors. The direct contrary effect will be likely to be produced by the perusal of writers who throw the generality of readers at such an unapproachable distance as to check presumption, instead of exciting it. Who are those ever-multiplying authors, that with unparalleled fecundity are overstocking the world with their quick-succeeding progeny? They are NOVEL-WRITERS: the easiness of whose productions is at once the cause of their own fruitful-

ness, and of the almost infinitely numerous race of imitators to whom they give birth. Such is the frightful facility of this species of composition, that every raw girl, while she reads, is tempted to fancy that she can also write. And as Alexander, on perusing the Iliad, found by congenial sympathy the image of Achilles stamped on his own ardent soul, and felt himself the hero he was studying; and as Corregio, on first beholding a picture which exhibited the perfection of the graphic art, prophetically felt all his own future greatness, and cried out in rapture, "And I, too, am a painter!" so a thorough-paced novel-reading Miss, at the close of every tissue of hackneyed adventures, feels within herself the stirring impulse of corresponding genius, and triumphantly exclaims, "And I, too, am an author!" The glutted imagination soon overflows with the redundance of cheap sentiment and plentiful incident, and by a sort of arithmetical proportion, is enabled by the perusal of any three novels, to produce a fourth; till every fresh production, like the prolific progeny of Banquo, is followed by

Another, and another, and another!

Is a lady, however destitute of talents, education, or knowledge of the world, whose studies have been completed by a circulating library, in any distress of mind? the writing a novel suggests itself as the best soother of her sorrows! Does she labour under any depression of circumstances? writing a novel occurs as the readiest receipt for

mending them! and she solaces her imagination with the conviction that the subscription which has been extorted by her importunity, or given to her necessities, has been offered as a homage to her genius; and this confidence instantly levies a fresh contribution for a succeeding work. Capacity and cultivation are so little taken into the account, that writing a book seems to be now considered as the only sure resource which the idle and the illiterate have always in their power.

May the Author be indulged in a short digression, while she remarks, though rather out of its place, that the corruption occasioned by these books has spread so wide, and descended so low, as to have become one of the most universal, as well as most pernicious, sources of corruption among us. Not only among milliners, mantua-makers, and other trades where numbers work together, the labour of one girl is frequently sacrificed that she may be spared to read those mischievous books to the others; but she has been assured by clergymen who have witnessed the fact, that they are procured and greedily read in the wards of our hospitals! an awful hint, that those who teach the poor to read, should not only take care to furnish them with principles which will lead them to abhor corrupt books, but that they should also furnish them with such books as shall strengthen and confirm their principles.*

* The above facts furnish no argument on the side of those who would keep the poor in ignorance. Those who cannot *read* can *hear*, and are likely to hear to worse pur-

And let every Christian remember, that there is no other way of entering truly into the spirit of that divine prayer, which petitions that the name of God may be "hallowed," that "his kingdom (of grace) may come," and that "his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven," than by each individual contributing according to his measure to accomplish the work for which he prays: for to pray that these great objects may be promoted, without contributing to their promotion by our exertions, our money, and our influence, is a palpable inconsistency.

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pose than those who have been better taught. And that ignorance furnishes no security for integrity either in morals or politics, the late revolts in more than one country, remarkable for the ignorance of the poor, fully illustrate. It is earnestly hoped that the above facts may tend to impress ladies with the importance of superintending the instruction of the poor, and of making it an indispensable part of their charity to give them moral and religious books.

The late celebrated Henry Fielding (a man not likely to be suspected of over-strictness) assured a particular friend of the author, that during his long administration of justice in Bow-Street, only *six* Scotchmen were brought before him. The remark did not proceed from any national partiality in the magistrate, but was produced by him in proof of the effect of a sober and religious education among the lower ranks, on their morals and conduct.

See farther the sentiments of a still more celebrated contemporary on the duty of instructing the poor. ——— "We have been taught that the circumstance of the Gospel's being preached to the poor was one of the surest tests of its mission. We think, therefore, that those do not believe it who do not care it should be preached to the poor."

Burke on the French Revolution.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL USE OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY.

WHILE every sort of useful knowledge should be carefully imparted to young persons, it should be imparted not merely for its own sake, but also for the sake of its subserviency to higher things. All human learning should be taught, not as an end, but a means; and in this view even a lesson of history or geography may be converted into a lesson of religion. In the study of history, the instructor will accustom the pupil not merely to store her memory with facts and anecdotes, and to ascertain dates and epochs; but she will accustom her also to trace effects to their causes, to examine the secret springs of action, and accurately to observe the operation of the passions. It is only meant to notice here some few of the moral benefits which may be derived from a judicious perusal of history; and from among other points of instruction, I select the following*:—

* It were to be wished that more historians resembled the excellent Rollin in the religious and moral turn given to his writings of this kind. But here may I be permitted to observe incidentally (for it is not immediately analogous to my subject), that there is one disadvantage which attends the common practice of setting young ladies to read ancient

The study of history may serve to give a clearer insight into the corruption of human nature:

It may help to show the *plan* of Providence in the direction of events, and in the use of unworthy instruments:

It may assist in the *vindication* of Providence, in the common failure of virtue, and the frequent success of vice:

It may lead to a distrust of our own judgment:

It may contribute to our improvement in self-knowledge.

But to prove to the pupil the important doctrine of human corruption from the study of history, will require a truly Christian commentator in the friend with whom the work is perused. For, from the low standard of right established by the generality of historians, who erect so many persons into *good* characters who fall short of the true idea of Christian virtue, the unassisted reader will be liable to form very imperfect views of what is real goodness, and will conclude, as his author sometimes does, that the true idea of human nature is

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history and geography in French or Italian, who have not been previously well grounded in the pronunciation of classical names of persons and places in our own language. The foreign terminations of Greek and Roman names are often very different from the English, and where they are first acquired are frequently retained and adopted in their stead, so as to give an illiterate appearance to the conversation of some women who are not really ignorant. And this defective pronunciation is the more to be guarded against in the education of ladies who are not taught *quantity* as boys are.

to be taken from the medium between his best and his worst characters; without acquiring a just notion of that prevalence of evil, which, in spite of those few brighter luminaries that here and there just serve to gild the gloom of history, tends abundantly to establish the doctrine. It will, indeed, be continually establishing itself by those who, in perusing the history of mankind, carefully mark the rise and progress of sin, from the first timid irruption of an evil thought, to the fearless accomplishment of the abhorred crime in which that thought has ended: from the indignant question, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"* to the perpetration of that very enormity of which the self-acquitting delinquent could not endure the slightest suggestion.

In this connection may it not be observed, that young persons should be put on their guard against a too implicit belief in the flattering accounts which many voyage-writers are fond of exhibiting of the virtue, amiableness, and benignity of some of the countries newly discovered by our circumnavigators; that they should learn to suspect the superior goodness ascribed to the Hindoos, and particularly the account of the inhabitants of the Pellew islands? These last, indeed, have been represented as having almost escaped the universal taint of our common nature, and would seem by their purity to have sprung from another ancestor than Adam.

We cannot forbear suspecting that these pleasing

* 2 Kings, viii. 13.

but somewhat overcharged portraits of man, in his natural state, are drawn, with the invidious design, by counteracting the doctrine of human corruption, to degrade the value and even destroy the necessity of the Christian sacrifice; by insinuating that uncultivated man is so disposed to rectitude as to supersede the occasion for that redemption which is professedly designed for sinners. That in countries professing Christianity, very many are not Christians will be too readily granted. Yet to say nothing of the vast superiority of goodness in the lives of those who are really governed by Christianity, is there not something even in her reflex light which guides to greater purity many of those who do not profess to walk by it? I doubt much, if numbers of the unbelievers of a Christian country, from the sounder views and better habits derived incidentally and collaterally, as it were, from the influence of a Gospel, the truth of which, however, they do not acknowledge, would not start at many of the actions which these *heathen perfectionists* daily commit without hesitation.

The religious reader of general history will observe the controlling hand of Providence in the direction of events; in turning the most unworthy actions and instruments to the accomplishment of his own purposes. She will mark Infinite Wisdom directing what appear to be casual occurrences to the completion of his own plan. She will point out how cause seemingly the most unconnected, events seemingly the most unpromising, circum-

stances seemingly the most incongruous, are all working together for some final good. She will mark how national as well as individual crimes are often over-ruled to some hidden purpose far different from the intention of the actors; how Omnipotence can, and often does, bring about the best purposes by the worst instruments; how the bloody and unjust conqueror is but "the rod of his wrath," to punish or to purify his offending children; how "the fury of the oppressor," and the sufferings of the oppressed, will one day, when the whole scheme shall be unfolded, vindicate *His* righteous dealings. She will explain to the less enlightened reader, how Infinite Wisdom often mocks the insignificance of human greatness, and the shallowness of human ability, by setting aside instruments the most powerful and promising, while He works by agents comparatively contemptible. But she will carefully guard this doctrine of Divine Providence, thus working out his own purposes through the sins of his creatures, and by the instrumentality of the wicked, by calling to mind, while the offender is but a tool in the hands of the great Artificer, "the woe denounced against him by whom the offence cometh!" She will explain how those mutations and revolutions in states which appear to us so unaccountable, and how those operations of Providence which seem to us so entangled and complicated, all move harmoniously and in perfect order: that there is not an event but has its commission; not a misfortune which breaks its allotted rank; not a

trial which moves out of its appointed track. While calamities and crimes seem to fly in casual confusion, all is commanded or permitted; all is under the control of a wisdom which cannot err, of a goodness which cannot do wrong.

To explain my meaning by a few instances. When the spirit of the youthful reader rises in honest indignation at that hypocritical piety which divorced an unoffending queen to make way for the lawful crime of our eighth Henry's marriage with Ann Boleyn; and when that indignation is increased by the more open profligacy which brought about the execution of the latter; the instructor will not lose so fair an occasion for unfolding how in the councils of the Most High the crimes of the King were over-ruled to the happiness of the country; and how, to this inauspicious marriage, from which the heroic Elizabeth sprang, the Protestant religion owed its firm stability. This view of the subject will lead the reader to justify the providence of God, without diminishing her abhorrence of the vices of the tyrant.

She will explain to her, how even the conquest of ambition, after having deluged a land with blood, involved the perpetrator in guilt, and the innocent victim in ruin, may yet be made the instrument of opening to future generations the way to commerce, to civilisation, to Christianity. She may remind her, as they are following Cæsar in his invasion of Britain, that whereas the conqueror fancied he was only gratifying his own

inordinate ambition, extending the flight of the Roman eagle, immortalising his own name, and proving that "this world was made for Cæsar;" he was in reality becoming the effectual though unconscious instrument of leading a land of barbarians to civilisation and to science; and was, in fact, preparing an island of pagans to embrace the religion of Christ. She will inform her, that when afterwards the victorious country of the same Cæsar had made Judea a Roman province, and the Jews had become its tributaries, the Romans did not know, nor did the indignant Jews suspect, that this circumstance was operating to the confimation of an event the most important the world ever witnessed.

For when "Augustus sent forth a decree that all the world should be taxed," he vainly thought he was only enlarging his own imperial power, whereas he was acting in unconscious subservience to the decree of a higher Sovereign, and was helping to ascertain by a public act the exact period of Christ's birth, and furnishing a record of his extraction from that family from which it was predicted by a long line of prophets that he should spring. Herod's atrocious murder of the innocents has added an additional circumstance for the confirmation of *our* faith; the incredulity of Thomas has strengthened *our* belief; nay, the treachery of Judas, and the injustice of Pilate, were the human instruments employed for the salvation of the world.

The youth that is not thoroughly armed with

Christian principles, will be tempted to mutiny not only against the justice but the very existence of a superintending Providence, in contemplating those frequent instances which occur in history of the ill success of the more virtuous cause, and the prosperity of the wicked. He will see with astonishment that it is Rome which triumphs, while Carthage, which had clearly the better cause, falls. Now and then, indeed, a Cicero prevails, and a Catiline is subdued; but often, it is Cæsar successful against the somewhat juster pretensions of Pompey, and against the still clearer cause of Cato. It is Octavius who triumphs, and it is over Brutus that he triumphs! It is Tiberius who is enthroned, while Germanicus falls!

Thus his faith in a righteous Providence at first view is staggered, and he is ready to say, "Surely it is not God that governs the earth!" But on a fuller consideration (and here the suggestions of a Christian instructor are peculiarly wanted) there will appear great wisdom in this very confusion of vice and virtue; for it is calculated to send our thoughts forward to a world of retribution, the principle of retribution being so imperfectly established in this. It is, indeed, so far common for virtue to have the advantage here, in point of happiness at least, though not of glory, that the course of Providence is still calculated to prove that God is on the side of virtue; but still, virtue is so often unsuccessful, that clearly the God of virtue, in order that his work may be perfect, must have in reserve a world of retribution. This confused state

of things, therefore, is just that state which is most of all calculated to confirm the deeply considerate mind in the belief of a future state; for if all here were even, or very nearly so, should we not say, "Justice is already satisfied, and there *needs* no other world?" On the other hand, if vice always triumphed, should we not then be ready to argue in favour of vice rather than virtue, and to *wish* for no other world?

It seems so very important to ground young persons in the belief that they will not inevitably meet in this world with reward and success according to their merit, and to habituate them to expect even the most virtuous attempts to be often, though not always, disappointed, that I am in danger of tautology on this point. This fact is precisely what history teaches. The truth should be plainly told to the young reader; and the antidote to that evil, which mistaken and worldly people would expect to arise from divulging this discouraging doctrine, is *faith*. The importance of faith, therefore, and the necessity of it to real, unbending, and persevering virtue, is surely made plain by profane history itself; for the same thing which happens to states and kings happens to private life and to individuals. Thus there is scarcely a page, even of pagan history, which may not be made instrumental to the establishing of the truth of Revelation; and it is only by such a guarded mode of instruction that some of the evils attending on the study of ancient literature can be obviated.

Distrust and diffidence in our own judgment seems to be also an important instruction to be learnt from history. How contrary to all expectation do the events therein recorded commonly turn out! How continually is the most sagacious conjecture of human penetration baffled! and yet we proceed to foretell this consequence, and to predict that event from the appearances of things under our own observation, with the same arrogant certainty as if we had never been warned by the monitory annals of successive ages.

There is scarcely one great event in history which does not, in the issue, produce effects upon which human foresight could never have calculated. The success of Augustus against his country produced peace in many distant provinces, who thus ceased to be harassed and tormented by this oppressive republic. Could this effect have been foreseen, it might have sobered the despair of Cato, and checked the vehemence of Brutus. In politics, in short, in every thing except in morals and religion, all is, to a considerable degree, uncertain. This reasoning is not meant to show that Cato ought not to have *fought*, but that he ought not to have *desponded* even after the last battle; and certainly, even upon his own principles, ought not to have killed himself. It would be departing too much from my object to apply this argument, however obvious the application, against those who were lately driven to unreasonable distrust and despair by the alarming successes of a neighbouring nation.

But all knowledge will be comparatively of little value, if we neglect self-knowledge; and of self-knowledge history and biography may be made successful vehicles. It will be to little purpose that our pupils become accurate critics on the characters of others, while they remain ignorant of themselves: for while to those who exercise a habit of self-application a book of profane history may be made an instrument of improvement in this difficult science; so without such an habit the Bible itself may, in this view, be read with little profit.

It will be to no purpose that the reader weeps over the fortitude of the Christian hero, or the constancy of the martyr, if she do not bear in mind that she herself is called to endure her own common trials with something of the same temper; if she do not bear in mind that to control irregular humours, and to submit to the daily vexations of life, will require, though in a lower degree, the exertion of the same principle, and supplication for the aid of the same Spirit which sustained the Christian hero in the trying conflicts of life, or the martyr in his agony at the stake.

May I be permitted to suggest a few instances, by way of specimen, how both sacred and common history may tend to promote self-knowledge? And let me again remind the warm admirer of suffering piety under *extraordinary trials*, that if she now fail in the petty occasions to which she is actually called out, she would not be likely

to have stood in those more trying occasions which excite her admiration.

While she is applauding the self-denying saint, who renounced his ease, or chose to embrace death rather than violate his duty, let her ask herself if she has never refused to submit to the paltry inconvenience of giving up her company, or even altering her dinner-hour on a Sunday, though by this trifling sacrifice her family might have been enabled to attend the public worship in the afternoon.

While she reads with horror that Belshazzar was rioting with his thousand nobles at the very moment when the Persian army was bursting through the brazen gates of Babylon, is she very sure that she herself, in an almost equally imminent moment of public danger, has not been nightly indulging in every species of dissipation?

When she is deploring the inconsistency of the human heart, while she contrasts in Mark Anthony his bravery and contempt of ease at one period, with his licentious indulgences at another; or while she laments over the intrepid soul of Cæsar, whom she had been following in his painful marches, or admiring in his contempt of death, now dissolved in dissolute pleasures with the ensnaring Queen of Egypt; let her examine whether she herself has never, though in a much lower degree, evinced something of the same inconsistency? whether she who lives, perhaps, an orderly, sober, and reasonable life during her summer residence in the country, does not plunge with little

scruple in the winter into all the most extravagant pleasures of the capital? whether she never carries about with her an accommodating kind of religion, which can be made to bend to places and seasons, to climates and customs, to times and circumstances; which takes its tincture from the fashion without, and not its habits from the principle within; which is decent with the pious, sober with the orderly, and loose with the licentious?

While she is admiring the generosity of Alexander in giving away kingdoms and provinces, let her, in order to ascertain whether she could imitate this magnanimity, take heed if she herself is daily seizing all the little occasions of doing good, which every day presents to the affluent? *Her* call is not to sacrifice a province; but does she sacrifice an opera ticket? She who is not doing all the good she can under her present circumstances, would not do all she foresees she should, in imaginary ones, were her power enlarged to the extent of her wishes.

While she is inveighing with patriotic indignation, that in a neighbouring metropolis thirty theatres were open every night in time of war and public calamity, is she very clear that in a metropolis which contains only three, she was not almost constantly at one of them in time of war and public calamity also? For though, in a national view, it may make a wide difference whether there be in the capital three theatres or thirty, yet, as the same person can only go to one of them at once, it makes but little difference as to the quantum of

dissipation in the individual. She who rejoices at successful virtue in a history, or at the prosperity of a person whose interests do not interfere with her own, may exercise her self-knowledge, by examining whether she rejoices equally at the happiness of every one about her; and let her remember, she does not rejoice at it in the true sense, if she does not labour to promote it. She who glows with raptute at a virtuous character in history, should ask her own heart, whether she is equally ready to do justice to the fine qualities of her acquaintance, though she may not particularly love them; and whether she takes unfeigned pleasure in the superior talents, virtues, fame, and fortune of those whom she professes to love, though she is eclipsed by them?

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In like manner, in the study of geography and natural history, the attention should be habitually turned to the goodness of Providence, who commonly adapts the various productions of climates to the peculiar wants of the respective inhabitants. To illustrate my meaning by one or two instances out of a thousand. The reader may be led to admire the considerate goodness of Providence in having caused the spiry fir, whose slender foliage does not obstruct the beams of the sun, to grow in the dreary regions of the North, whose shivering inhabitants could spare none of its scanty rays; while in the torrid zone, the palm-tree, the plantain and the banana, spread their umbrella leaves to break the almost intolerable fervours of a verti-

cal sun. How the camel, who is the sole carrier of all the merchandise of Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Arabia, and Barbary, who is obliged to transport his incredible burdens through countries in which pasture is so rare, can subsist twenty-four hours without food, and can travel, loaded, many days without water, through dry and dusty deserts, which supply none; and all this, not from the habit, but from the conformation of the animal: for naturalists make this conformity of powers to climates a rule of judgment in ascertaining the native countries of animals, and always determine it to be that to which their powers and properties are most appropriate.

Thus the writers of natural history are, perhaps, unintentionally magnifying the operations of Providence, when they insist that animals do not modify and give way to the influence of other climates: but here they too commonly stop; neglecting, or perhaps refusing, to ascribe to Infinite Goodness this wise and merciful accommodation. And here the pious instructor will come in, in aid of their deficiency: for philosophers too seldom trace up causes, and wonders, and blessings to their Author. And it is peculiarly to be regretted that a late justly celebrated French naturalist*, who, though not famous for his accuracy, possessed such diversified powers of description, that he had the talent of making the driest subjects interesting; together with such a liveliness of delineation, that his characters of animals are drawn with a spirit

* Buffon.

and variety rather to be looked for in an historian of men than of beasts:—it is to be regretted, I say, that this writer, with all his excellences, is absolutely inadmissible into the library of a young lady, both on account of his immodesty and his impiety; and if in wishing to exclude him, it may be thought wrong to have given him so much commendation, it is only meant to show that the author is not led to reprobate his principles from insensibility to his talents. The remark is rather made to put the reader on remembering that no brilliancy of genius, no diversity of attainments, should ever be allowed as a commutation for defective principles and corrupt ideas.*

* Goldsmith's History of Animated Nature has many references to a Divine Author. It is to be wished that some judicious person would publish a new edition of Buffon's work, purified from the indelicate and offensive parts.

Since this work was published, this suggestion has been adopted by the Rev. W. Bingley, in his admirable work entitled "Animal Biography," in three volumes.

CHAP. X.

ON THE USE OF DEFINITIONS, AND THE MORAL BENEFITS OF ACCURACY IN LANGUAGE.

"PERSONS having been accustomed from their cradles to learn words before they knew the ideas for which they stand, usually continue to do so all their lives, never taking the pains to settle in their minds the determined ideas which belong to them. This want of a precise signification in their words, when they come to reason, *especially in moral matters*, is the cause of very obscure and uncertain notions. They use these undetermined words confidently without much troubling their heads about a certain fixed meaning, whereby, besides the ease of it, they obtain this advantage, that as in such discourse they are seldom in the right, so they are as seldom to be convinced that they are in the wrong, it being just the same to go about to draw those persons out of their mistakes, who have no settled notions, as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation who has no settled abode. — The chief end of language being to be understood, words serve not for that end when they do not excite in the hearer the same idea which they stand for in the mind of the speaker."*

I have chosen to shelter myself under the broad sanction of the great author here quoted, with a view to apply this rule in philology to a moral

* Locke.

purpose; for it applies to the veracity of conversation as much as to its correctness; and as strongly recommends unequivocal and simple truth as accurate and just expression. Scarcely any one, perhaps, has an adequate conception how much clear and correct expression favours the elucidation of truth; and the side of truth is obviously the side of morals; it is, in fact, one and the same cause; and it is, of course, the same cause with that of true religion also.

It is, therefore, no worthless part of education, even in a religious view, to study the precise meaning of words, and the appropriate signification of language. To this end I know no better method than to accustom young persons very early to a habit of *defining* common words and things; for, as definition seems to lie at the root of correctness, to be accustomed to define English words in English would improve the understanding more than barely to know what those words are called in French, Italian, or Latin. Or rather, one use of learning other languages is, because definition is often involved in etymology; that is, since many English words take their derivation from foreign or ancient languages, they cannot be so accurately understood without some knowledge of those languages: but precision of any kind, either moral or philological, too seldom finds its way into the education of women.

It is, perhaps, going out of my province to observe, that it might be well if young *men* also, before they entered on the world, were to be fur-

nished with correct definitions of certain words, the use of which is become rather ambiguous; or rather, they should be instructed in the *double sense* of modern phraseology. For instance; they should be provided with a good definition of the word *honour* in the fashionable sense, showing what vices it includes, and what virtues it does not include: the term *good company*, which even the courtly Petronius of our days has defined as sometimes including not a few immoral and disreputable characters: *religion*, which, in the various senses assigned it by the world, sometimes means superstition, sometimes fanaticism, and sometimes a mere disposition to attend on any kind of form of worship: the word *goodness*, which is made to mean every thing that is not notoriously bad; and sometimes even that too, if what is notoriously bad be accompanied by good humour, pleasing manners, and a little alms-giving. By these means, they would go forth armed against many of the false opinions which, through the abuse or ambiguous meaning of words, pass so current in the world.

But to return to the youthful part of that sex which is the more immediate object of this little work. With correct definition they should also be taught to study the shades of words; and this not merely with a view to accuracy of expression, though even that involves both sense and elegance, but with a view to moral truth.

It may be thought ridiculous to assert, that morals have any connection with the purity of language, or that the precision of truth may be

violated through defect of critical exactness in the three degrees of comparison; yet how frequently do we hear from the dealers in superlatives, of "most admirable, super-excellent, and quite perfect" people, who, to plain persons, not bred in the school of exaggeration, would appear mere common characters, not rising above the level of mediocrity! By this negligence in the just application of words, we shall be as much misled by these trope-and-figure ladies when they degrade as when they panegyrise; for, to a plain and sober judgment, a tradesman may *not* be "the most good-for-nothing fellow that ever existed," merely because it was impossible for him to execute in an hour an order which required a week; a lady may *not* be "the most hideous fright the world ever saw," though the make of her gown may have been obsolete for a month; nor may one's young friend's father "be a monster of cruelty," though he may be a quiet gentleman who does not choose to live at watering-places, but likes to have his daughter stay at home with him in the country.

Of all the parts of speech the interjection is the most abundantly in use with the hyperbolical fair ones. Would it could be added that these emphatical expletives (if I may make use of a contradictory term) were not sometimes tinctured with profaneness! Though I am persuaded that idle habit is often more at the bottom of this deep offence than intended impiety, yet there is scarcely any error of youthful talk which merits severer castigation. And a habit of exclamation should

be rejected by polished people as vulgar, even if it were not abhorred as profane.

The habit of exaggerating trifles, together with the grand female failing of excessive mutual flattery, and elaborate general professions of fondness and attachment, is inconceivably cherished by the voluminous private correspondences in which some girls are indulged. In vindication of this practice it is pleaded that a facility of style, and an easy turn of expression, are acquisitions to be derived from an early interchange of sentiments by letter-writing: but even if it were so, these would be dearly purchased by the sacrifice of that truth and sobriety of sentiment, that correctness of language, and that ingenuous simplicity of character and manners, so lovely in female youth.

Next to pernicious reading, imprudent and violent friendships are the most dangerous snares to this simplicity; and boundless correspondences with different confidantes, whether they live in a distant province, or, as it often happens, in the same street, are the fuel which principally feeds this dangerous flame of youthful sentiment. In those correspondences the young friends often encourage each other in the falsest notions of human life, and the most erroneous views of each other's character. Family affairs are divulged, and family faults aggravated: vows of everlasting attachment and exclusive fondness are, in a pretty just proportion, bestowed on every friend alike. These epistles overflow with quotations from the most passionate of the dramatic poets; and passages,

wrested from their natural meaning, and pressed into the service of sentiment, are, with all the violence of misapplication, compelled to suit the case of the heroic transcriber.

But antecedent to this *epistolary period* of life, they should have been accustomed to the most scrupulous exactness in whatever they relate. They should maintain the most critical accuracy in *facts*, in *dates*, in *numbering*, in *describing*; in short, in whatever pertains, either directly or indirectly, closely or remotely, to the great fundamental principle, *truth*. It is so very difficult for persons of great liveliness to restrain themselves within the sober limits of strict veracity, either in their assertions or narrations, especially when a little undue indulgence of fancy is apt to procure for them the praise of genius and spirit, that this restraint is one of the earliest principles which should be worked into the youthful mind.

The conversation of young females is also in danger of being overloaded with epithets. As in the warm season of youth hardly any thing is seen in the true point of vision, so hardly any thing is named in naked simplicity; and the very sensibility of the feelings is partly a cause of the extravagance of the expression. But here, as in other points, the sacred writers, particularly of the New Testament, present us with the purest models; and its natural and unlaboured style of expression is, perhaps, not the meanest evidence of the truth of the Gospel. There is, throughout the whole narratives, no overcharged character, no elaborate

description, nothing studiously emphatical, as if truth of itself were weak, and wanted to be helped out. There is little panegyric, and less invective; none but on great, and awful, and justifiable occasions. The authors record their own faults with the same honesty as if they were the faults of other men, and the faults of other men with as little amplification as if they were their own. There is, perhaps, no book in which adjectives are so sparingly used. A modest statement of the fact, with no colouring and little comment, with little emphasis and no varnish, is the example held out to us for correcting the exuberances of passion and of language by that divine volume, which furnishes us with the still more important rule of faith and standard of practice. Nor is the truth lowered by any feebleness, nor is the spirit diluted, nor the impression weakened by this soberness and moderation; for with all this plainness there is so much force, with all this simplicity there is so much energy, that a few slight touches and artless strokes of Scripture characters convey a stronger outline of the person delineated than is sometimes given by the most elaborate and finished portrait of more artificial historians.

If it be objected to this remark, that many parts of the sacred writings abound in a lofty, figurative, and even hyperbolical style; this objection applies chiefly to the writings of the Old Testament, and to the prophetical and poetical parts of that. But the metaphorical and florid style of those writings is distinct from the inaccurate and over-straine

expression we have been censuring; for that only is inaccuracy which leads to a false and inadequate conception in the reader or hearer. The lofty style of the Eastern, and of other heroic poetry, does not so mislead; for the metaphor is understood to be a metaphor, and the imagery is understood to be ornamental. The style of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is not, it is true, plain in opposition to figurative; nor simple in opposition to florid; but it is plain and simple in the best sense, as opposed to false principles and false taste; it raises no wrong idea: it gives an exact impression of the thing it means to convey; and its very tropes and figures, though bold, are never unnatural or affected: when it embellishes, it does not mislead; even when it exaggerates, it does not misrepresent; if it be hyperbolical, it is so either in compliance with the genius of Oriental language, or in compliance with contemporary customs, or because the subject is one which will be most forcibly impressed by a strong figure. The loftiness of the expression deducts nothing from the weight of the circumstance; the imagery animates the reader without misleading him; the boldest illustration, while it dilates his conception of the subject, detracts nothing from its exactness; and the Divine Spirit, instead of suffering truth to be injured by the opulence of the figures, contrives to make these figures fresh and varied avenues to the heart and the understanding.

CHAP. XI.

ON RELIGION. — THE NECESSITY AND DUTY OF EARLY INSTRUCTION SHOWN BY ANALOGY WITH HUMAN LEARNING.

It has been the fashion of our late innovators in philosophy, who have written some of the most brilliant and popular treatises on education, to decry the practice of early instilling religious knowledge into the minds of children. In vindication of this opinion it has been alleged, that it is of the utmost importance to the cause of truth, that the mind of man should be kept free from prepossessions; and, in particular, that every one should be left to form such judgment on religious subjects as may seem best to his own reason in maturer years.

This sentiment has received some countenance from those better characters who have wished, on the fairest principle, to encourage free enquiry in religion; but it has been pushed to the blamable excess here censured, chiefly by the new philosophers; who, while they profess only an ingenuous zeal for truth, are, in fact, slily endeavouring to destroy Christianity itself, by discountenancing, under the plausible pretence of free enquiry, all attention whatever to the religious education of our youth.

It is undoubtedly our duty, while we are instil-

ling principles into the tender mind, to take peculiar care that those principles be sound and just; that the religion we teach be the religion of the Bible, and not the inventions of human error or superstition; that the principles we infuse into others be such as we ourselves have well scrutinised, and not the result of our credulity or bigotry; nor the mere hereditary, unexamined prejudices of our own undiscerning childhood. It may also be granted, that it is the duty of every parent to inform the youth, that, when his faculties shall have so unfolded themselves as to enable him to examine for himself those principles which the parent now is instilling, it will be his duty so to examine them.

But, after making these concessions, I would most seriously insist that there are certain leading and fundamental truths; that there are certain sentiments on the side of Christianity, as well as of virtue and benevolence, in favour of which every child *ought* to be prepossessed; and may it not be also added, that to expect to keep the mind void of all prepossession, even upon any subject, appears to be altogether a vain and impracticable attempt? an attempt, the very suggestion of which argues much ignorance of human nature.

Let it be observed here, that we are not combating the infidel; that we are not producing evidences and arguments in favour of the truth of Christianity, or trying to win over the assent of the reader to that which he disputes; but that we are taking it for granted, not only that Christianity is true, but that we are addressing those who believe

it to be true;—an assumption which has been made throughout this work. Assuming, therefore, that there are religious principles which are true, and which ought to be communicated in the most effectual manner, the next question which arises seems to be, at what age and in what manner these ought to be inculcated? That it ought to be at an early period we have the command of Christ, who encouragingly said, in answer to those who would have repelled their approach, "Suffer *little* children to come unto me."

But here conceding, for the sake of argument, what yet cannot be conceded, that some good reasons *may* be brought in favour of delay; allowing that such impressions as are communicated early may not be very deep; allowing them even to become totally effaced by the subsequent corruptions of the heart and of the world; still I would illustrate the importance of early infusing religious knowledge, by an allusion drawn from the power of early habit in human learning. Put the case, for instance, of a person who was betimes initiated in the rudiments of classical studies. Suppose him, after quitting school, to have fallen, either by a course of idleness or of vulgar pursuits, into a total neglect of study. Should this person, at any future period, happen to be called to some profession, which should oblige him, as we say, to rub up his Greek and Latin, his memory still retaining the unobliterated though faint traces of his early pursuits, he will be able to recover his neglected learning with less difficulty than he could now

begin to learn; for he is not again obliged to set out with studying the simple elements; they come back on being pursued; they are found on being searched for; the decayed images assume shape, and strength, and colour; he has in his mind first principles to which to recur; the rules of grammar which he has allowed himself to violate, he has not, however, forgotten; he will recall neglected ideas, he will resume slighted habits far more easily than he could now begin to acquire new ones. I appeal to clergymen who are called to attend the dying beds of such as have been bred in gross and stupid ignorance of religion, for the justness of this comparison. Do they not find that these unhappy people have no ideas in common with them? that *they* therefore possess no intelligible medium by which to make themselves understood? that the persons to whom they are addressing themselves have no first principles to which they can be referred? that they are ignorant not only of the science but the language of Christianity?

But at worst, whatever be the event of a pious education to the child, though in general we are encouraged from the tenor of Scripture and the course of experience, to hope that the event will be favourable, and that "when he is old he will not depart from it," is it nothing for the parent to have acquitted himself of this prime duty? Is it nothing to him that he has obeyed the plain command of "training his child in the way he should go?" And will not the parent who so acquits himself, with better reason and more lively hope,

supplicate the Father of mercies for the reclaiming of a prodigal, who has wandered out of that right path in which he has set him forward, than for the conversion of a neglected creature, to whose feet the Gospel had never been offered as a light? And how different will be the dying reflections even of that parent whose earnest endeavours have been unhappily defeated by the subsequent and voluntary perversion of his child, from his who will reasonably aggravate his pangs, by transferring the sins of his neglected child to the number of his own transgressions?

And to such well-intentioned but ill-judging parents as really wish their children to be hereafter pious, but erroneously withhold instruction till the more advanced period prescribed by the great master of splendid paradoxes * shall arrive; who can assure them, that while they are withholding the good seed, the great and ever vigilant enemy, who assiduously seizes hold on every opportunity which *we* slight, and cultivates every advantage which *we* neglect, may not be stocking the fallow ground with tares? Nay, who in this fluctuating scene of things can be assured, even if this were not certainly to be the case, that to them the promised period ever shall arrive at all? Who shall ascertain to them that their now neglected child shall certainly live to receive the delayed instruction? Who can assure them that they themselves will live to communicate it?

It is almost needless to observe that parents

* Rousseau.

who are indifferent about religion, much more those who treat it with scorn, are not likely to be anxious on this subject; it is therefore the attention of *religious* parents which is here chiefly called upon; and the more so, as there seems, on this point, an unaccountable negligence in many of these, whether it arise from indolence, false principles, or whatever other motive.

But, independently of knowledge, it is something, nay, let philosophers say what they will, it is much, to give youth *prepossessions* in favour of religion; to secure their *prejudices* on its side before you turn them adrift into the world; a world in which, before they can be completely armed with arguments and reasons, they will be assailed by numbers whose prepossessions and prejudices, far more than *their* arguments and reasons, attach them to the other side. Why should not the Christian youth furnish himself in the best cause with the same natural armour which the enemies of religion wear in the worst? It is certain, that to set out in life with sentiments in favour of the religion of our country is no more an error or a weakness than to grow up with a fondness for our country itself. If the love of our country be judged a fair principle, surely a Christian, who is "a citizen of no mean city," may lawfully have *his* attachments too. If patriotism be an honest prejudice, Christianity is not a servile one. Nay, let us teach the youth to hug his prejudices, to glory in his prepossessions, rather than to acquire that versatile and accommodating citizenship of the

world, by which he may be an Infidel in Paris, a Papist at Rome, and a Mussulman at Cairo. *

Let me not be supposed so to elevate politics, or so to depress religion, as to make any comparison of the value of the one with the other, when I observe, that between the true British patriot and the true Christian, there will be this common resemblance: the more deeply each of them enquires, the more will he be confirmed in his respective attachment, the one to his country, the other to his religion. I speak with reverence of the immeasurable distance; but the more the one presses on the firm arch of our constitution, and the other on that of Christianity, the stronger he will find them both. Each challenges scrutiny: each has nothing to dread but from shallow politicians and shallow philosophers; in each, intimate knowledge justifies prepossession; in each, investigation confirms attachment.

If we divide the human being into three component parts, the bodily, the intellectual, and the spiritual, is it not reasonable that a portion of care and attention be assigned to each in some degree adequate to its importance? Should I venture to say a *due* portion, a portion adapted to the real comparative value of each, would not that condemn in one word the whole system of modern education? The rational and intellectual part being avowedly more valuable than the bodily, while the spiritual and immortal part exceeds even

* Bonaparte had recently adopted these characters in rapid succession.

the intellectual still more than that surpasses what is corporeal, is it acting according to the common rules of proportion? is it acting on the principles of distributive justice? is it acting with that good sense and right judgment with which the ordinary business of this world is usually transacted, to give the larger proportion of time and care to that which is worth the least? Is it fair that what relates to the body and the organs of the body, I mean those accomplishments which address themselves to the eye and the ear, should occupy almost the whole thoughts; while the intellectual part should be robbed of its due proportion, and the spiritual part should have almost no proportion at all? Is not this preparing your children for an awful disappointment in the tremendous day when they shall be stripped of that body, of those senses and organs, which have been made almost the sole objects of their attention, and shall feel themselves left in possession of nothing but that spiritual part which in education was scarcely taken into the account of their existence?

Surely it should be thought a reasonable compromise (and I am in fact undervaluing the object for the importance of which I plead) to suggest, that at least two thirds of that time which is now usurped by externals should be restored to the rightful owners, the understanding and the heart; and that the acquisition of religious knowledge in early youth should at least be *no less* an object of sedulous attention than the cultivation of human learning or of outward embellishments. It is also

not unreasonable to suggest, that we should in Christianity, as in arts, sciences, or languages, begin with the beginning, set out with the simple elements, and thus "go on unto perfection."

Why in teaching to draw do you begin with straight lines and curves, till by gentle steps the knowledge of outline and proportion be obtained, and your picture be completed; never losing sight, however, of the elementary lines and curves? Why, in music, do you set out with the simple notes, and pursue the acquisition through all its progress, still in every stage recurring to the notes? Why in the science of numbers do you invent the simplest methods of conveying just ideas of computation, still referring to the tables which involve the fundamental rules? Why in the science of quantity do men introduce the pupil at first to the plainest diagrams, and clear up one difficulty before they allow another to appear? Why in teaching languages to the youth do you sedulously infuse into his mind the rudiments of syntax? Why in parsing is he led to refer every word to its part of speech, to resolve every sentence into its elements, to reduce every term to its original, and from the first case of nouns, and and the first tense of verbs, to explain their formations, changes and dependencies, till the principles of language become so grounded, that, by continually recurring to the rules, speaking and writing correctly are fixed into a habit? Why all this, but because you uniformly wish him to be grounded in each of his acquirements? Why,

but because you are persuaded that a slight, and slovenly, and superficial, and irregular way of instruction will never train him to excellence in any thing?

Do young persons then become musicians, and painters, and linguists, and mathematicians, by early study and regular labour; and shall they become Christians by accident? or, rather, is not this acting on that very principle of Dogberry, at which you probably have often laughed? Is it not supposing that religion, like "reading and writing, comes by nature?" Shall all those accomplishments, "which perish in the using," be so assiduously, so systematically taught? Shall all those habits, which are limited to the things of this world, be so carefully formed, so persisted in, as to be interwoven with our very make, so as to become as it were a part of ourselves; and shall that knowledge which is to make us "wise unto salvation" be picked up at random, cursorily, or, perhaps, not picked up at all? Shall that difficult divine science which requires "line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little;" that knowledge which parents, even under a darker dispensation, were required "to teach their children *diligently*, and to talk of it when they sat in their house, and when they walked by the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up;" shall this knowledge be by Christian parents omitted or deferred, or taught slightly; or be superseded by things of comparatively little worth?

Shall the lively period of youth, the soft and

impressible season when lasting habits are formed, when the seal cuts deep into the yielding wax, and the impression is more likely to be clear, and sharp, and strong, and lasting; shall this warm and favourable season be suffered to slide by, without being turned to the great purpose for which not only youth but life, and breath, and being were bestowed? Shall not that "faith without which it is impossible to please God;" shall not that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord;" shall not that knowledge which is the foundation of faith and practice; shall not that charity without which all knowledge is "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal," be impressed, be inculcated, be enforced, as early, as constantly, as fundamentally, with the same earnest pushing on to continual progress, with the same constant reference to first principles, as are used in the case of those arts which merely adorn human life? Shall we not seize the happy period when the memory is strong, the mind and all its powers vigorous and active, the imagination busy and all alive; the heart flexible, the temper ductile, the conscience tender, curiosity awake, fear powerful, hope eager, love ardent; shall we not seize this period for inculcating that knowledge, and impressing those principles which are to form the character, and fix the destination for eternity?

I would now address myself to another and a still more dilatory class, who are for procrastinating all concern about religion till they are driven to it by actual distress, and who do not think of praying

till they are perishing, like the sailor, who said, "he thought it was always time enough to begin to pray when the storm began." Of these I would ask, shall we, with an unaccountable deliberation, defer our anxiety about religion till the busy man and the dissipated woman are become so immersed in the cares of life, or so entangled in its pleasures, that they will have little heart or spirit to embrace a new principle?—a principle whose precise object it will be to condemn that very life in which they have already embarked; nay, to condemn almost all that they have been doing and thinking ever since they first began to act or think? Shall we, I say, begin now? or shall we suffer those instructions, to receive which requires all the concentrated powers of a strong and healthy mind, to be put off till the day of excruciating pain, till the period of debility and stupefaction? Shall we wait for that season as if it were the most favourable for religious acquisitions, when the senses shall have been palled by excessive gratification, when the eye shall be tired with seeing, and the ear with hearing? Shall we, when the whole man is breaking up by disease or decay, expect that the dim apprehension will discern a new science, or the obtuse feelings delight themselves with a new pleasure?—a pleasure, too, not only incompatible with many of the hitherto-indulged pleasures, but one which carries with it a strong intimation that those pleasures terminate in the death of the soul?

But, — not to lose sight of the important analogy on which we have already dwelt so much, — how preposterous would it seem to you to hear any one propose to an illiterate dying man to set about learning even the plainest and easiest rudiments of any new art; to study the musical notes; to conjugate a verb; to learn, not the first problem in Euclid, but even the numeration table? and yet you do not think it absurd to postpone religious instruction, on principles, which, if admitted at all, must terminate either in ignorance or in your proposing too late to a dying man to begin to learn the totally-unknown scheme of Christianity. You do not think it impossible that he should be brought to listen to the "voice of this charmer," when he can no longer listen to "the voice of singing men and singing women." You do not think it unreasonable that immortal beings should delay to devote their days to heaven, till they have "no pleasure in them" themselves. You will not bring them to offer up the first fruits of their lips, and hearts, and lives to their Maker, because you persuade yourselves that he who has called himself a "jealous God" may, however, be contented hereafter with the wretched sacrifice of decayed appetites, and the worthless leavings of almost extinguished affections.

We can scarcely believe, even with all the melancholy procrastination we see around us, that there is any one, except he be a decided infidel, who does not consider religion as, at least, a good reversionary thing; as an object which ought

always to occupy a little remote corner of his map of life; the study of which, though it is always to be postponed, is, however, not to be finally rejected; which, though it cannot conveniently come into his present scheme of life, it is intended somehow or other to take up before death. This awful deception, this defect in the intellectual vision, arises, partly from the bulk which the objects of time and sense acquire in our eyes by their nearness; while the invisible realities of eternity are but faintly discerned by a feeble faith, through a dim and distant medium. It arises, also, partly from a totally false idea of the nature of Christianity, from a fatal fancy that we can repent at any future period, and that, as amendment is a thing which will always be in our own power, it will be time enough to think of reforming our life when we should think only of closing it.

But depend upon it, that a heart long hardened, I do not mean by gross vices merely, but by fondness for the world, by an habitual and excessive indulgence in the pleasures of sense, will by no means be in a favourable state to admit the light of Divine truth, or to receive the impressions of Divine grace. God, indeed, sometimes shows us by an act of his sovereignty that this wonderful change, the conversion of a sinner's heart, may be produced without the intervention of human means, to show that the work is HIS. But as this is not the way in which the Almighty usually deals with his creatures, it would be nearly as preposterous for men to act on this presumption, and sin on

in hopes of a miraculous conversion, as it would be to take no means for the preservation of their lives, because Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead.

CHAP. XII.

ON THE MANNER OF INSTRUCTING YOUNG PERSONS IN RELIGION.—GENERAL REMARKS ON THE GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY.

I WOULD now with great deference address those respectable characters who are really concerned about the best interests of their children; those to whom Christianity is indeed an important consideration, but whose habits of life have hitherto hindered them from giving it its due degree in the scale of education.

Begin, then, with considering that religion is a part, and the most prominent part, in your system of instruction. Do not communicate its principles in a random desultory way; nor scantily stint this business to only such scraps and remnants of time as may be casually picked up from the gleanings of other acquirements. "Will you bring to God for a sacrifice that which costs you nothing?" Let the best part of the day, which with most people is the earliest part, be steadily and invariably dedicated to this work by your children, before they are tired with their other studies, while the intellect is clear, the spirits light, and the attention sharp and unfatigued.

Confine not your instructions to mere verbal rituals and dry systems; but communicate them

in a way which shall interest their feelings, by lively images, and by a warm practical application of what they read to their own hearts and circumstances. If you do not study the great but too much slighted art of fixing, of commanding, of chaining the attention, you may throw away much time and labour, with little other effect than that of disgusting your pupil and wearying yourself. There seems to be no good reason that while every other thing is to be made amusing, religion alone must be dry and uninviting. Do not fancy that a thing is good merely because it is dull. Why should not the most entertaining powers of the human mind be supremely consecrated to that subject which is most worthy of their full exercise? The misfortune is, that religious learning is too often rather considered as an act of the memory than of the heart and affections; as a dry duty, rather than a lively pleasure. The manner in which it is taught differs as much from their other learning as punishment from recreation. Children are turned over to the dull work of getting by rote as a task that which they should get from example, from animated conversation, from lively discussion, in which the pupil should learn to bear a part, instead of being merely a passive hearer. Teach them rather, as their blessed Saviour taught, by interesting parables, which, while they corrected the heart, left some exercise for the ingenuity in the solution, and for the feelings in their application. Teach, as HE taught, by seizing on surrounding objects, passing events, local

circumstances, peculiar characters, apt allusions, just analogy, appropriate illustration. Call in all creation, animate and inanimate, to your aid, and accustom your young audience to

> " Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Even when the nature of your subject makes it necessary for you to be more plain and didactic, do not fail frequently to enliven these less engaging parts of your discourse with some incidental imagery, which will captivate the fancy; with some affecting story with which it shall be associated in the memory. Relieve what would otherwise be too dry and preceptive with some striking exemplification in point, some touching instance to be imitated, some awful warning to be avoided; something which shall illustrate your instruction, which shall realise your position; which shall embody your idea, and give shape and form, and colour and life to your precept. Endeavour unremittingly to connect the reader with the subject, by making her feel that what you teach is neither an abstract truth nor a thing of mere general information, but that it is a business in which *she herself* is individually and immediately concerned; in which not only her eternal salvation but her *present* happiness is involved. Do, according to your measure of ability, what the Holy Spirit which dictated the Scriptures has done; always take the sensibility of the learner into your account of the faculties which are to be worked upon.

"For the doctrines of the Bible," as the profound and enlightened Bacon observes, "are not proposed to us in a naked logical form, but arrayed in the most beautiful and striking colours which creation affords."

By those affecting illustrations used by Him "who knew what was in man," and therefore best knew how to address him, it was that the unlettered audiences of Christ and his apostles were enabled both to comprehend and to relish doctrines, which would not readily have made their way to their understandings, had they not first touched their hearts; and which would have found access to neither the one nor the other, had they been delivered in dry scholastic disquisitions. Now, those audiences not being learned, may be supposed to have been nearly in the state of children, as to their receptive faculties, and to have required nearly the same sort of instruction; that is, they were more capable of being moved with what was simple, and touching, and lively, than what was elaborate, abstruse, and unaffecting. Heaven and earth were made to furnish their contributions, when man was to be taught that science which was to make him wise unto salvation. Something which might enforce or illustrate was borrowed from every element. The appearances of the sky, the storms of the ocean, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fruits of the earth, the seed and the harvest, the labours of the husbandman, the traffic of the merchant, the seasons of the year! — all were laid hold of in turn;

and the most important moral instruction, or religious truth, was deduced from some recent occurrence, some natural appearance, some ordinary fact.

If that be the purest eloquence which most persuades, and which comes home to the heart with the fullest evidence and the most irresistible force, then no eloquence is so powerful as that of Scripture; and an intelligent Christian teacher will be admonished by the mode of Scripture itself, how to communicate its truths with life and spirit; "while he is musing, the fire burns:" that fire which will preserve him from an insipid and freezing mode of instruction. He will, moreover, as was said above, always carefully keep up a quick sense of the personal interest the pupil has in every religious instruction which is impressed upon him. He will teach as Paul prayed, "with the spirit, and with the understanding also;" and, in imitating this great model, he will necessarily avoid the opposite faults of two different sorts of instructors; for while some of our divines of the higher class have been too apt to preach as if mankind had only intellect, and the lower and more popular sort as if they had only passions, let him borrow what is good from both, and address his pupils as beings compounded of both understanding and affections.*

* The zeal and diligence with which the Bishop of London's weekly lectures have been attended by persons of all ranks and descriptions, but more especially by that class to which this little work is addressed, is a very promising cir-

Fancy not that the Bible is too difficult and intricate to be presented in its own naked form, and that it puzzles and bewilders the youthful understanding. In all needful and indispensable points of knowledge, the darkness of Scripture, as a great Christian philosopher * has observed, "is but a partial darkness, like that of Egypt, which benighted only the enemies of God, while it left his children in clear day." It is not pretended that the Bible will *find* in the young reader clear views of God and of Christ, of the soul and eternity, but that it will *give* them. And if it be really the appropriate character of Scripture, as it tells us itself that it is, "to enlighten the eyes of the *blind*," and "to make wise the *simple*," then it is as well calculated for the youthful and uninformed as for any other class; and as it was never expected that the greater part of Christians should be learned, so is learning, though of inestimable value in a *teacher* of theology, no *essential* qualification for a common Christian; for which reason Scripture truths are expressed with that clear and simple evidence adapted to the kind of assent which they require, — an assent materially different from

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cumstance for the age. And while we consider with pleasure the advantages peculiarly to be derived by the young from so interesting and animated an exposition of the Gospel, we are further led to rejoice at the countenance given by such high authority to the revival of that excellent but too much neglected practice of lectures.

* Mr. Boyle.

that sort of demonstration which a mathematical theorem demands. He who could bring an unprejudiced heart and an unperverted will, would bring to the Scriptures the best qualification for understanding and receiving them. And though they contain things which the pupil cannot comprehend, (as what ancient poet, historian, or orator does not?) the teacher may address to him the words which Christ addressed to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Histories of the Bible, and commentaries on the Bible, for the use of children, though valuable in their way, should never be used as substitutes for the Bible itself. For historical or geographical information, for calling the attention to events and characters, they are very useful. But Scripture truths are best conveyed in its own sublime and simple phraseology; its doctrines are best understood in its own appropriate language; its precepts are best retained in their own simple form. Paraphrase, in professing to explain, often dilutes; while the terseness and brevity of Scripture composition fills the mind, touches the heart, and fastens on the memory. While I would cause them to "read" the commentary for the improvement of the understanding, they should "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the Bible itself for the comfort and edification of the heart.

Young people who have been taught religion in a formal and superficial way, who have had all its drudgeries and none of its pleasures, will pro-

bably have acquired so little relish for it as to consider the continued prosecution of their religious studies as a badge of their tutelage, as a mark that they are still under subjection; and we look forward with impatience to the hour of their emancipation from the lectures of Christianity, as the era of their promised liberty, the epocha of independence. They will long for the period when its lessons shall cease to be delivered; will conclude that, having once attained such an age, and arrived at the required proficiency, the object will be accomplished, and the labour at an end. But let not *your* children "so learn Christ." Apprise them that no specific day will ever arrive on which they shall say, I *have* attained; but inform them, that every acquisition must be followed up; knowledge must be increased; prejudices subdued; good habits rooted; evil ones eradicated; heavenly dispositions strengthened; right principles confirmed; till, going on from light to light, and from strength to strength, they come "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

But though serious instruction will not only be uninteresting but irksome, if conveyed to youth in a cold didactic way; yet if their affections be suitably engaged, while their understandings are kept in exercise, their hearts, so far from necessarily revolting, as some insist, will often receive the most solemn truths with alacrity. It is, as we have repeated, the manner which revolts them, and not the thing. Nor will they, as some assert,

necessarily dislike the teacher, because the truths taught are of the most awful and solemn kind. It has happened to the writer to be a frequent witness of the gratitude and affection expressed by young persons to those who had sedulously and seriously instructed them in religious knowledge: an affection as lively, a gratitude as warm, as could have been excited by any indulgence to their persons, or any gratification of a worldly nature.

As it is notorious that men of wit and sprightly fancy have been the most formidable enemies to Christianity, while men, in whom those talents have been consecrated to God, have been some of her most useful champions, take particular care to press that ardent and ever-active power, the *imagination*, into the service of religion. This bright and busy faculty will be leading its possessor into perpetual peril, and is an enemy of peculiar potency till it come to be employed in the cause of God. It is a lion, which, though worldly prudence indeed may *chain*, so as to prevent outward mischief, yet the malignity remains within; but, when sanctified by Christianity, the imagination is a lion *tamed*: you have all the benefit of its strength and its activity, divested of its mischief. God never bestowed that noble but restless faculty, without intending it to be an instrument of his own glory, though it has been too often set up in rebellion against him; because, in its youthful stirrings, while all alive and full of action, it has not been seized upon to serve its rightful Sovereign, but was early enlisted, with little oppo-

sition, under the banners of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Religion is the only subject on which, under the guidance of a severe and sober-minded prudence, this discursive faculty can safely stretch its powers and expand its energies. But let it be remembered, that it must be a sound and genuine Christianity which can alone so chastise and regulate the imagination as to restrain it from those errors and excesses into which a false, a mistaken, an irregular religion has too often led its injudicious and ill-instructed professor. Some of the most fatal extremes into which a wild enthusiasm or a frightful superstition has plunged its unhappy votaries have been owing to the want of a due direction, to the want of a strict and holy castigation of this ever-working faculty. To secure imagination, therefore, on the safe side, and, if I may change the metaphor, to put it under the direction of its true Pilot in the stormy voyage of life, is like engaging those potent elements, the wind and tide, in your favour.

In your communications with young people, take care to convince them that as religion is not a business to be laid aside with the lesson, so neither is it a single branch of duty, some detached thing, which, like the acquisition of an art or a language, is to be practised separately, and to have its distinct periods and separate modes of operation. But let them understand, that common acts, by the spirit in which they are to be performed, are to be made acts of religion. Let them perceive that Christianity may be considered

as having something of that influence over the conduct which external grace has over the manners; for as it is not the performance of some particular act which denominates any one to be graceful, — grace being a spirit diffused through the whole system, which animates every sentiment, and informs every action; as she who has true personal grace has it uniformly, and is not sometimes awkward and sometimes elegant; does not sometimes lay it down, and sometimes take it up; — so religion is not an occasional act, but an indwelling principle, an inwrought habit, a pervading and informing spirit; from which, indeed, every act derives all its life, and energy, and beauty.

Give them clear views of the broad discrimination between practical religion and worldly morality; in short, between the virtues of Christians and of Pagans. Show them that no good qualities are genuine but such as flow from the religion of Christ. Let them learn that the virtues which the better sort of people, who yet are destitute of true Christianity, inculcate and practise, resemble those virtues which have the love of God for their motive, just as counterfeit coin resembles sterling gold: they may have, it is true, certain points of resemblance with the others; they may be bright and shining; they have, perhaps, the image and the superscription; but they ever want the true distinguishing properties: they want the sterling value derived from purity and weight. They may, indeed, pass current in the traffic of this world;

but, when brought to the touchstone, they will be found full of alloy; when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, "they will be found wanting:" they will not stand that final trial which is to separate "the precious from the vile;" they will not abide the day "of *his* coming, who is like a refiner's fire."

One error into which even some good people are apt to fall is that of endeavouring to deceive young minds by temporising expedients. In order to allure them to become religious, they exhibit false, or faint, or inadequate views of Christianity; and while they represent it, as it really is, as a life of superior happiness and advantage, they conceal its difficulties, and, like the jesuitical Chinese missionaries, extenuate, or sink, or deny such parts of it as are least alluring to human pride. In attempting to disguise its principle, they destroy its efficacy: they deny the cross, instead of making it the badge of a Christian. But, besides that, the project fails with them as it did with the Jesuits: all fraud is bad in itself; and a pious fraud is a contradiction in terms, which ought to be buried in the rubbish of papal desolation.

Instead of representing to the young Christian that it may be possible, by a prudent ingenuity, at once to pursue, with equal ardour and success, worldly fame and eternal glory, would it not be more honest to tell him fairly and unambiguously, that there are two distinct roads, between which there is a broad boundary line? that there are two contending and irreconcilable interests? that he

must forsake the one if he would cleave to the other? that "there are two masters," both of whom it is impossible to serve? that there are two sorts of characters at eternal variance? that he must renounce the one if he is in earnest for the other? that nothing short of absolute decision can make a confirmed Christian? Point out the different sorts of promises annexed to these different sorts of characters. Confess, in the language of Christ, how the man of the world often obtains (and it is the natural course of human things) the recompense he sedulously seeks. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." Explain the beatitudes, on the other hand, and unfold what kind of specific reward is there individually promised to its concomitant virtue. Show your pupil that to that "poverty of spirit" to which "the kingdom of heaven" is promised, it would be inconsistent to expect that the recompense of human commendation should be also attached; that to that "purity of heart" to which the beatific vision is annexed, it would be unreasonable to suppose you can unite the praise of licentious wits, or the admiration of a catch-club. These will be bestowed on their appropriate and corresponding merits. Do not enlist them under false colours: disappointment will produce desertion. Different sorts of rewards are attached to different sorts of services; and while you truly assert that religion's ways are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," take care that you do not lead them to depend too exclusively on worldly happiness

and earthly peace, for these make no part of the covenant: they may be, and they often are, superadded, but they were never stipulated in the contract.

But if, in order to attract the young to a religious course, you disingenuously conceal its difficulties while you are justly enlarging upon its pleasures, you will tempt them to distrust the truth of Scripture itself; for what will they think, not only of a few detached texts, but of the general cast and colour of the Gospel, when contrasted with your representation of it? When you are describing to them the inseparable human advantages which will follow a religious course, what notion will they conceive of "the strait gate" and "narrow way?" of the amputation of a "right hand?" of the excision of a "right eye?" of the other strong metaphors by which the Christian warfare is shadowed out? of "crucifying the flesh?" of "mortifying the old man?" of "dying unto sin?" of "overcoming the world?" Do you not think their meek and compassionate Saviour, who died for your children, loved them as well as you love them? And if this were his language, ought it not to be yours? It is the language of true love; of that love with which a merciful God loved the world, when he spared not his own Son. Do not fear to tell your children what he told his disciples, that "in the world they shall have tribulation;" but teach them to rise superior to it, on *his* principle, by "overcoming the world." Do not, then, try to conceal from them that the life of

a Christian is necessarily opposite to the life of the world; and do not seek, by a vain attempt at accommodation, to reconcile that difference which Christ himself has pronounced to be irreconcilable.

May it not be partly owing to the want of a due introduction to the knowledge of the real nature and spirit of religion, that so many young Christians, who set out in a fair and flourishing way, decline and wither when they come to perceive the requisitions of experimental Christianity? requisitions which they had not suspected of making any part of the plan; and from which, when they afterwards discover them, they shrink back, as not prepared and hardened for the unexpected contest.

People are no more to be cheated into religion than into learning. The same spirit which influences your oath in a court of justice should influence your discourse in that court of equity,—your family. Your children should be told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is unnecessary to add, that it must be done gradually and discreetly. We know whose example we have for postponing that which the mind is not yet prepared to receive: — "I have many things yet to say to you, but ye cannot bear them *now*." Accustom them to reason by analogy. Explain to them that great *worldly* attainments are never made without great sacrifices; that the merchant cannot become rich without industry; the statesman eminent without labour; the scholar learned

without study; the hero renowned without danger. Would it not, then, on human principles, be unreasonable to think that the Christian alone should obtain a triumph without a warfare? the highest prize with the lowest exertions? an eternal crown without a present cross? and that heaven is the only reward which the idle may reckon upon? No: though salvation "be the *gift* of God," yet it must be "*worked out.*" Convince your young friends, however, that in this case the difficulty of the battle bears no proportion to the prize of the victory. In one respect, indeed, the point of resemblance between worldly and Christian pursuits fails, and that most advantageously for the Christian; for while, even by the most probable means, which are the union of talents with diligence, no human prosperity can be *insured* to the worldly candidate, — while the most successful adventurer may fail by the fault of another; while the best-concerted project of the statesman may be crushed; the bravest hero lose the battle; the brightest genius fail of getting bread; and while, moreover, the pleasure arising even from success in these may be no sooner tasted than it is poisoned by a more prosperous rival, — the persevering Christian is safe and certain of obtaining *his* object: no misfortunes can defeat *his* hope, no competition can endanger *his* success; for though another gain, he will not lose; nay, the success of another, so far from diminishing his gain, is an addition to it: the more he diffuses, the richer he grows; his blessings are enlarged by communication; and

that mortal hour which cuts off for ever the hopes of worldly men crowns and consummates his.

Beware, at the same time, of setting up any act of self-denial or mortification as the *procuring* cause of salvation. This would be a presumptuous project to *purchase* that eternal life which is declared to be the "free *gift* of God." This would be to send your children, not to the Gospel to learn their Christianity, but to the monks and ascetics of the middle ages; it would be sending them to Peter the Hermit, and the holy fathers of the Desert, and not to Peter the Apostle and his Divine Master. Mortification is not the price: it is nothing more than the discipline of a soul of which sin is the disease, the diet prescribed by the great Physician. Without this guard, the young devout Christian would be led to fancy that abstinence, pilgrimage, and penance might be adopted as the chief substitute for the subdued desire, the resisted temptation, the conquered corruption, and the obedient will; and would be almost in as much danger, on the one hand, of self-righteousness arising from austerities and mortification, as she would be, on the other, from self-gratification in the indulgences of the world. And while you carefully impress on her the necessity of living a life of strict obedience if she would please God, do not neglect to remind her, also, that a complete renunciation of her own performances as a ground of merit, *purchasing* the favour of God by their own intrinsic worth, is included in that obedience.

It is of the last importance, in stamping on

young minds a true impression of the genius of Christianity, to possess them with a conviction that it is the purity of the motive which not only gives worth and beauty, but which, in a Christian sense, gives life and soul to the best action: nay, that while a right intention will be acknowledged and accepted at the final judgment, even without the act, the act itself will be disowned which wanted the basis of a pure design. "Thou didst well that it was in thy *heart* to build me a temple," said the Almighty to that monarch whom yet he permitted not to build it. How many splendid actions will be rejected in the great day of retribution, to which statues and monuments have been raised on earth, while their almost deified authors shall be as much confounded at their own unexpected reprobation, as at the Divine acceptance of those "whose life the world counted madness!" It is worthy of remark, that "Depart from me, I never knew you," is not the malediction denounced on the sceptic or the scoffer, on the profligate and the libertine, but on the high professor, on the unfruitful worker of "miracles," on the unsanctified utterer of "prophecies;" for even acts of piety, wanting the purifying principle, however they may dazzle men, offend God. Cain sacrificed, Balaam prophesied, Rousseau most sublimely panegyrised the *Son of Mary*, VOLTAIRE BUILT A CHURCH!—nay, so superior was *his* affectation of sanctity, that he ostentatiously declared, that, while others were raising churches to *saints*, there was one man at least who would erect *his*

church to *God* * ; — that God whose altars he was overthrowing, whose name he was vilifying, whose Gospel he was exterminating, and the very name of whose Son he had solemnly pledged himself to blot from the face of the earth !

Though it be impossible here to enumerate all those Christian virtues which should be impressed in the progress of a Christian education, yet, in this connection, I cannot forbear mentioning one which more immediately grows out of the subject, and to remark, that the principle which should be the invariable concomitant of all instruction, and especially of religious instruction, is *humility*. As this temper is inculcated in every page of the Gospel, as it is deducible from every precept and every action of Christ, that is a sufficient intimation that it should be made to grow out of every study, that it should be grafted on every acquisition. It is the turning point, the leading principle, indicative of the very genius, of the very being of Christianity. This chastising quality should, therefore, be constantly made in education to operate as the only counteraction of that "knowledge which puffeth up." Youth should be taught, that as humility is the discriminating characteristic of our religion, therefore a proud Christian, a haughty disciple of a crucified Master, furnishes perhaps a stronger opposition in terms than the whole compass of language can exhibit. They should be taught that humility, being the

* *Deo erexit Voltaire*, is the inscription affixed by himself on his church at Ferney.

appropriate grace of Christianity, is precisely the thing which makes Christian and pagan virtues *essentially* different. The virtues of the Romans, for instance, were obviously founded in pride. As a proof of this, they had not even a *word* in their copious language to express humility but what was used in a bad sense, and conveyed the idea of meanness or vileness, of baseness and servility. Christianity so stands on its own single ground, is so far from assimilating itself to the spirit of other religions, that, unlike the Roman emperor, who, though he would not become a Christian, yet ordered that the image of Christ should be set up in the Pantheon with those of the heathen gods, and be worshipped in common with them;—Christianity not only rejects all such partnerships with other religions, but it pulls down their images, defaces their temples, tramples on their honours, founds its own existence on the ruins of spurious religions and spurious virtues, and will be every thing when it is admitted to be any thing.

Will it be going too much out of the way to observe, that Christian Britain retaliates upon pagan Rome? For if the former used humility in a bad sense, has not the latter learnt to use pride in a good one? May we, without impertinence, venture to remark, that in the deliberations of as honourable and upright political assemblies as ever adorned, or, under Providence, upheld a country; in orations which leave us nothing to envy in Attic or Roman eloquence in their best days;—it were to be wished that we did not borrow

from Rome an epithet which suited the genius of her religion, as much as it militates against that of ours? The panegyrist of the battle of Marathon, of Platea, or of Zama, might with propriety speak of a "proud day," or a "proud event," or a "proud success." But surely the Christian encomiasts of the battle of the Nile might, from their abundance, select an epithet better appropriated to such a victory; — a victory which, by preserving Europe, has, perhaps, preserved that religion which sets its foot on the very neck of pride, and in which the conqueror himself, even in the first ardours of triumph, forgot not to ascribe the victory to ALMIGHTY GOD.* Let us leave to the enemy both the term and the thing; arrogant words being the only weapons in which we must ever vail to their decided superiority. As we must despair of the victory, let us disdain the contest.

Above all things, then, you should beware that your pupils do not take up with a vague, general, and undefined religion; but look to it that their Christianity be really the religion of Christ. Instead of slurring over the doctrines of the Cross, as disreputable appendages to our profession, which are to be disguised or got over as well as we can, but which are never to be dwelt upon, take care to make these your grand fundamental articles. Do not dilute or explain away these doctrines, and by some elegant periphrasis *hint* at a Saviour, instead of making him the foundation-stone of your system. Do not convey primary, and plain, and awful, and

* Lord Nelson.

indispensable truths elliptically, — I mean as something that is to be understood without being expressed; nor study fashionable circumlocutions to avoid names and things on which our salvation hangs, in order to prevent your discourse from being offensive. Persons who are thus instructed in religion, with more good-breeding than seriousness and simplicity, imbibe a distaste for plain scriptural language; and the Scriptures themselves are so little in use with a certain fashionable class of readers, that when the doctrines and language of the Bible occasionally occur in other authors, or in conversation, they present a sort of novelty and peculiarity which offend; and such readers as disuse the Bible are apt, from a supposed delicacy of taste, to call that precise and puritanical, which is, in fact, sound and scriptural. Nay, it has several times happened to the author to hear persons of sense and learning ridicule insulated sentiments and expressions that have fallen in their way, which they would have treated with decent respect had they known them to be, as they really were, texts of Scripture. This observation is hazarded with a view to enforce the importance of early communicating religious knowledge, and of infusing an early taste for the venerable phraseology of Scripture.

The persons in question, thus possessing a kind of pagan Christianity, are apt to acquire a sort of pagan expression also, which just enables them to speak with complacency of the "Deity," of a "First Cause," and of "conscience." Nay, some may

even go so far as to talk of "the Founder of our religion," of the "Author of Christianity," in the same general terms as they would talk of the prophet of Arabia, or the lawgiver of China, of Athens, or of the Jews. But their refined ears revolt not a little at the unadorned name of Christ; and especially the naked and unqualified term of our Saviour, or Redeemer, carries with it a queerish, inelegant, not to say a suspicious, sound. They will express a serious disapprobation of what is wrong under the moral term of *vice*, or the forensic term of *crime*; but they are apt to think that the Scripture term of *sin* has something fanatical in it; and, while they discover a great respect for morality, they do not much relish holiness, which is, indeed, the specific and only morality of a Christian. They will speak readily of a man's reforming, or leaving off a vicious habit, or growing more correct in some individual practice; but the idea conveyed under any of the Scripture phrases signifying a total change of heart, they would stigmatise as the very shibboleth of a sect, though it is the language of a Liturgy they affect to admire, and of a Gospel which they profess to receive.

CHAP. XIII.

HINTS SUGGESTED FOR FURNISHING YOUNG PERSONS WITH A SCHEME OF PRAYER.

THOSE who are aware of the inestimable value of prayer themselves, will naturally be anxious, not only that this duty should be earnestly inculcated on their children, but that they should be taught it in the best manner; and *such* parents need little persuasion or counsel on the subject. Yet children of decent and orderly (I will not say of strictly religious) families are often so superficially instructed in this important business, that when they are asked what prayers they use, it is not unusual for them to answer, "The Lord's Prayer and the *Creed*." And even some who are better taught are not always made to understand with sufficient clearness the specific distinction between the two: that the one is the confession of their *faith*, and the other the model for their *supplications*. By this confused and indistinct beginning they set out with a perplexity in their ideas, which is not always completely disentangled in more advanced life.

An intelligent mother will seize the first occasion which the child's opening understanding shall allow, for making a little course of lectures on the Lord's Prayer, taking every division or short sentence separately; for each furnishes valuable ma-

terials for a distinct lecture. The child should be led gradually through every part of this divine composition: she should be taught to break it into all the regular divisions into which, indeed, it so naturally resolves itself. She should be made to comprehend, one by one, each of its short but weighty sentences; to amplify and spread them out for the purpose of better understanding them, not in their most extensive and critical sense, but in their most simple and obvious meaning. For in these condensed and substantial expressions every word is an ingot, and will bear beating out; so that the teacher's difficulty will not so much be what she shall say as what she shall suppress, so abundant is the expository matter which this succinct pattern suggests.

When the child has a pretty good conception of the meaning of each division, she should then be made to observe the connection, relation, and dependence of the several parts of this prayer one upon another; for there is great method and connection in it. We pray that the "kingdom of God may come," as the best means to "hallow his name;" and that by us, the obedient subjects of his kingdom, "his will may be done." A judicious interpreter will observe how logically and consequently one clause grows out of another, though she will use neither the word logical nor consequence; for all explanations should be made in the most plain and familiar terms, it being words, and not things, which commonly perplex children, if, as it sometimes happens, the teacher,

though not wanting sense, want perspicuity and simplicity. *

The young person, from being made a complete mistress of this short composition, (which as it is to be her guide and model through life, too much pains cannot be bestowed on it,) will have a clearer conception, not only of its individual contents, but of prayer in general, than many ever attain, though their memory has been, perhaps, loaded with long and unexplained forms, which they have been accustomed to swallow in the lump. without scrutiny and without discrimination. Prayer should not be so swallowed. It is a regular prescription which should stand analysis and bear examination: it is not a charm, the successful operation of which depends on your blindly taking it, without knowing what is in it, and in which the good you receive is promoted by your ignorance of its contents.

I would have it understood, that by these little comments I do not mean that the child should be put to learn dry, and to her unintelligible, expositions, but that the exposition is to be colloquial. And here I must remark in general, that the teacher is sometimes unreasonably apt to

* It might, perhaps, be a safe rule to establish for prayer in general, to suspect that any petition which cannot in some shape or other be accommodated to the spirit of some part of this prayer may not be right to be adopted. Here temporal things are kept in their due subordination: they are asked for moderately, as an acknowledgment of our dependence and of God's power; "for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things."

relieve herself at the child's expense, by loading the *memory* of a little creature on occasions in which far other faculties should be put in exercise. The child herself should be made to furnish a good part of this extemporaneous commentary by her answers; in which answers she will be much assisted by the judgment the teacher uses in her manner of questioning. And the youthful understanding, when its powers are properly set at work, will soon strengthen by exercise, so as to furnish reasonable, if not very correct answers.

Written forms of prayer are not only useful and proper, but indispensably necessary to begin with. But I will hazard the remark, that if children are thrown *exclusively* on the best forms, if they are made to commit them to memory like a copy of verses, and to repeat them in a dry, customary way, they will produce little effect on their minds. They will not understand what they repeat, if we do not early open to them the important *scheme* of prayer. Without such an elementary introduction to this duty, they will afterwards be either ignorant or enthusiastic, or both. We should give them *knowledge* before we can expect them to make much progress in *piety*, and as a due preparative to it: Christian instruction in this resembling the sun, who, in the course of his communications, gives light before he gives heat. And to labour to excite a spirit of devotion without first infusing that knowledge out of which it is to grow, is practically reviving the popish maxim, that Ignorance is the mother of Devotion,

and virtually adopting the popish rule, of praying in an unknown tongue.

Children, let me again observe, will not attend to their prayers if they do not understand them; and they will not understand them, if they are not taught to analyse, to dissect them, to know their component parts, and to methodise them.

It is not enough to teach them to consider prayer under the general idea that it is an application to God for what they want, and an acknowledgment to Him for what they have. This, though true in the gross, is not sufficiently precise and correct. They should learn to define and arrange all the different parts of prayer. And as a preparative to prayer itself, they should be impressed with as clear an idea as their capacity and the nature of the subject will admit, of "HIM with whom they have to do." His omnipresence is, perhaps, of all his attributes, that of which we may make the first practical use. Every head of prayer is founded on some great scriptural truths, which truths the little analysis here suggested will materially assist to fix in their minds.

On the knowledge that "God is," that he is an infinitely holy Being, and that "he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him," will be grounded the first part of prayer, which is *adoration*. The creature devoting itself to the Creator, or *self-dedication*, next presents itself. And if they are first taught that important truth, that as needy creatures they want help, which may be done by some easy analogy, they will easily be

led to understand how naturally *petition* forms a most considerable branch of prayer; and divine grace being among the things for which they are to petition, this naturally suggests to the mind the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Spirit. And when to this is added the conviction which will be readily worked into an ingenious mind, that as offending creatures they want pardon, the necessity of *confession* will easily be made intelligible to them. But they should be brought to understand that it must not be such a general and vague confession as awakens no sense of personal humiliation, as excites no recollection of their own more peculiar and individual faults. But it must be a confession founded on self-knowledge, which is itself to arise out of the practice of self-examination: for want of this sort of discriminating habit, a well-meaning but ill-instructed girl may be caught confessing the sins of some other person, and omitting those which are more especially her own. On the gladness of heart natural to youth, it will be less difficult to impress the delightful duty of *thanksgiving*, which forms so considerable a branch of prayer. In this they should be habituated to recapitulate not only their general, but to enumerate their peculiar, daily, and incidental mercies, in the same specific manner as they should have been taught to detail their individual and personal *wants* in the petitionary, and their *faults* in the confessional, part. The same warmth of feeling, which will more readily dispose them to express their gratitude to God in thanksgiving, will also

lead them more gladly to express their love to their parents and friends, by adopting another indispensable, and, to an affectionate heart, pleasing part of prayer, which is *intercession.*

When they have been made, by a plain and perspicuous mode of instruction, fully to understand the different nature of all these; and when they clearly comprehend that *adoration, self-dedication, confession, petition, thanksgiving,* and *intercession,* are distinct heads, which must not be involved in each other, you may exemplify the rules by pointing out to them these successive branches in any well-written form. And they will easily discern, that *ascription of glory* to that God to whom we owe so much, and on whom we so entirely depend, is the conclusion into which a Christian's prayer will naturally resolve itself. It is hardly needful to remind the teacher that our truly scriptural Liturgy invariably furnishes the example of presenting *every* request in the name of the great Mediator. For there is no access to the Throne of Grace but by *that new and living way.* In the Liturgy, too, they will meet with the best exemplifications of prayers, exhibiting separate specimens of each of the distinct heads we have been suggesting.

But in order that the minds of young persons may, without labour or difficulty, be gradually brought into such a state of preparation as to be benefited by such a little course of lectures as we have recommended, they should, from the time when they were first able to read, have been em-

ploying themselves at their leisure hours, in laying in a store of provision for their present demands: and here the memory may be employed to good purpose; for being the first faculty which is ripened, and which is, indeed, perfected when the others are only beginning to unfold themselves, this is an intimation of Providence that it should be the first seized on for the best uses. It should, therefore, be devoted to lay in a stock of the more easy and devotional parts of Scripture. The Psalms alone are an inexhaustible store-house of rich materials.* Children, whose minds have been early well furnished from these, will be competent at nine or ten years old to produce from them, and to select, with no contemptible judgment, suitable examples of all the parts of prayer, and will be able to extract and appropriate texts under each respective head, so as to exhibit, without help, complete specimens of every part of prayer. By confining them entirely to the sense, and nearly to the words of Scripture, they will be preserved from enthusiasm, from irregularity, and conceit; by being obliged continually to apply for themselves, they will get a habit in all their difficulties of "searching the Scriptures," which may be hereafter useful to them on other and more

* This will be so far from spoiling the cheerfulness, or impeding the pleasures, of childhood, that the Author knows a little girl who, before she was seven years old, had learnt the whole Psalter through a second time; and that without any diminution of uncommon gaiety of spirits, or any interference with the elegant acquirements suited to her station.

trying occasions. But I would at first *confine* them to the Bible: for were they allowed with equal freedom to ransack other books with a view to get helps to embellish their little compositions, or rather compilations, they might be tempted to pass off for their own what they pick up from others; which might tend at once to make them both vain and deceitful. This is a temptation to which they are too much laid open when they find themselves extravagantly commended for any pilfered passage with which they decorate their little themes and letters. But in the present instance there is no danger of any similar deception; for there is such a sacred signature stamped on every Scripture phrase, that the owner's name can never be defaced or torn off from the goods either by fraud or violence.

It would be well, if in those Psalms which children were first directed to get by heart, an eye were had to this their future application, and that they were employed, but without any intimation of your subsequent design, in learning such as may be best turned to this account. In the hundred and thirty-ninth, the first great truth to be imprinted on the young heart, the Divine omnipresence, as was before observed, is unfolded, with such a mixture of majestic grandeur, and such an interesting variety of intimate and local circumstances, as is likely to seize on the quick and lively feelings of youth. The awful idea that that Being whom she is taught to reverence is not only *in general* "acquainted with all her ways,"

but that "he is about her path, and about her bed," bestows such a sense of real and present existence on *him* of whom she is apt to conceive as having his distant habitation only in heaven, as will greatly help her to realise the sense of his actual presence.

The hundred and third Psalm will open to the mind rich and abundant sources of expression for gratitude and thanksgiving, and it includes the acknowledgment of spiritual as well as temporal favours: it illustrates the compassionate mercies of God by familiar and domestic images, of such peculiar tenderness and exquisite endearment, as are calculated to strike upon every chord of filial fondness in the heart of an affectionate child. The fifty-first supplies an infinite variety of matter in whatever relates to confession of sin, or to supplication for the aids of the Spirit. The twenty-third abounds with captivating expressions of the protecting goodness and tender love of their heavenly Father, conveyed by pastoral imagery of uncommon beauty and sweetness: in short, the greater part of these charming compositions overflows with materials for every head of prayer.

The child who, while she was engaged in learning these Scriptures, was not aware that there was any specific object in view, or any farther end to be answered by it, will afterwards feel an unexpected pleasure arising from the application of her petty labours, when she is called to draw out from her little treasury of knowledge the stores she has been insensibly collecting; and will be pleased to

find that without any fresh application to study, for she is now obliged to exercise a higher faculty than memory, she has lying ready in her mind the materials with which she is at length called upon to work. Her judgment must be set about selecting one, or two, or more texts which shall contain the substance of every specific head of prayer before noticed; and it will be a further exercise to her understanding to concatenate the detached parts into one regular whole, occasionally varying the arrangement as she likes; that is, changing the order, sometimes beginning with invocation, sometimes with confession; sometimes dwelling longer on one part, sometimes on another. As the hardships of a religious Sunday are often so pathetically pleaded, as making one of the heavy burdens of religion; and as the friends of religion are so often called upon to mitigate its intolerable rigours, by recommending pleasant employment, might not such an exercise as has been here suggested assist, by varying its occupations, to lighten its load?

The habits of the pupil being thus early formed, her memory, attention, and intellect being bent in a right direction, and the exercise invariably maintained, may we not reasonably hope that her *affections* also, through Divine grace, may become interested in the work, till she will be enabled "to pray with the spirit and with the understanding also?" She will now be qualified to use a well-composed form, if necessary, with seriousness and advantage; for she will now use it not mechanically,

but rationally. That which before appeared to her a mere mass of good words, will now appear a significant composition, exhibiting variety, and regularity, and beauty; and while she will have the further advantage of being enabled by her improved judgment to distinguish, and select for her own purpose, such prayers as are more judicious and more scriptural, it will also habituate her to look for plan, and design, and lucid order, in other works.

A

VIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT

PREVALENT AMONG

WOMEN OF RANK AND FORTUNE.

CHAP. XIV.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF FEMALE KNOWLEDGE, WITH A SKETCH OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER, AND A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE SEXES.

THE chief end to be proposed, in cultivating the understandings of women is to qualify them for the practical purposes of life. Their knowledge is not often, like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, and never in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct: it is to be exhibited in life and manners. A lady studies, not that she may qualify herself to become an orator or a pleader; not that she may learn to debate, but to act. She is to read the best books, not so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvement which they furnish to the rectification of her principles and the formation of her habits. The great uses of study to a woman are to enable her to regulate

her own mind, and to be instrumental to the good of others.

To woman, therefore, whatever be her rank, I would recommend a predominance of those more sober studies, which, not having display for their object, may make her wise without vanity, happy without witnesses, and content without panegyrists; the exercise of which may not bring celebrity, but will improve usefulness. She should pursue every kind of study which will teach her to elicit truth; which will lead her to be intent upon realities; will give precision to her ideas; will make an exact mind. She should cultivate every study which, instead of stimulating her sensibility, will chastise it; which will neither create an excessive nor a false refinement; which will give her definite notions; will bring the imagination under dominion; will lead her to think, to compare, to combine, to methodise; which will confer such a power of discrimination, that her judgment shall learn to reject what is dazzling, if it be not solid; and to prefer, not what is striking, or bright, or new, but what is just. That kind of knowledge which is rather fitted for home consumption than foreign exportation is peculiarly adapted to women. *

* May I be allowed to strengthen my own opinion with the authority of Dr. Johnson, that *a woman cannot have too much arithmetic?* It is a solid, practical acquirement, in which there is much use and little display; it is a quiet sober kind of knowledge, which she acquires for herself and her family, and not for the world.

It is because the superficial nature of their education furnishes them with a false and low standard of intellectual excellence, that women have too often become ridiculous by the unfounded pretensions of literary vanity; for it is not the really learned, but the smatterers, who have generally brought their sex into discredit, by an absurd affectation, which has set them on despising the duties of ordinary life. There have not indeed been wanting (but the character is not now common) *Précieuses Ridicules* *, who, assuming a superiority to the sober cares which ought to occupy their sex, have claimed a lofty and supercilious exemption from the dull and plodding drudgeries

Of this dim speck called earth!

There have not been wanting ill-judging females, who have affected to establish an unnatural separation between talents and usefulness, instead of bearing in mind that talents are the great appointed instruments of usefulness; who have acted as if knowledge were to confer on woman a kind of fantastic sovereignty, which should exonerate her from the discharge of female duties; whereas, it is only meant the more eminently to qualify her for the performance of them. A woman of real sense will never forget, that while the greater part of her proper duties are such as the most moderately gifted may fulfil with credit, — since Providence never makes that to be very difficult

* See a comedy of Moliere so entitled.

which is generally necessary; — yet that the most highly endowed are equally bound to fulfil them; and let her remember that the humblest of these offices, performed on Christian principles, are wholesome for the minds even of the most enlightened, as they tend to the casting down of those "high imaginations," which women of genius are too much tempted to indulge.

For instance, ladies whose natural vanity has been aggravated by a false education may look down on *economy* as a vulgar attainment, unworthy of the attention of a highly cultivated intellect; but this is the false estimate of a shallow mind. Economy, such as a woman of fortune is called on to practise, is not merely the petty detail of small daily expenses, the shabby curtailments and stinted parsimony of a little mind, operating on little concerns; but it is the exercise of a sound judgment exerted in the comprehensive outline of order, of arrangement, of distribution; of regulations by which alone well-governed societies, great and small, subsist. She who has the best regulated mind will, others things being equal, have the best regulated family. As in the superintendence of the universe, wisdom is seen in its *effects;* and as in the visible works of Providence, that which goes on with such beautiful regularity is the result not of chance but of design; so that management which seems the most easy is commonly the consequence of the best concerted plan; and a well-concerted plan is seldom the offspring of an ordinary mind. A sound economy is a sound

understanding brought into action; it is calculation realised; it is the doctrine of proportion reduced to practice; it is foreseeing consequences, and guarding against them; it is expecting contingences, and being prepared for them. The difference is, that to a narrow-minded vulgar economist the details are continually present; she is overwhelmed by their weight, and is perpetually bespeaking your pity for her labours, and your praise for her exertions; she is afraid you will not see how much she is harassed. She is not satisfied that the machine moves harmoniously, unless she is perpetually exposing every secret spring to observation. Little events and trivial operations engross her whole soul; while a woman of sense, having provided for their probable recurrence, guards against the inconveniences, without being disconcerted by the casual obstructions which they offer to her general scheme. Subordinate expenses and inconsiderable retrenchments should not swallow up that attention which is better bestowed on regulating the general scale of expense, correcting and reducing an overgrown establishment, and reforming radical and growing excesses.

Superior talents, however, are not so common, as, by their frequency, to offer much disturbance to the general course of human affairs; and many a lady, who tacitly accuses herself of neglecting her ordinary duties because she is a *genius*, will perhaps be found often to accuse herself as unjustly as good St. Jerome, when he laments that he was

beaten by the angel for being too Ciceronian in his style.

The truth is, women who are so puffed up with the conceit of talents as to neglect the plain duties of life will not frequently be found to be women of the best abilities. And here may the author be allowed the gratification of observing, that those women of real genius and extensive knowledge, whose friendship has conferred hônour and happiness on her own life, have been, in general, eminent for economy and the practice of domestic virtues; and have risen superior to the poor affectation of neglecting the duties and despising the knowledge of common life, with which literary women have been frequently, and not always unjustly, accused.

A romantic girl with a pretension to sentiment, which her still more ignorant friends mistake for genius, — for in the empire, of the blind the one-eyed are kings, — and possessing something of a natural ear, has, perhaps, in her childhood exhausted all the images of grief, and love, and fancy, picked up in her desultory poetical reading, in an elegy on a sick linnet, or a sonnet on a dead lap-dog; she begins thenceforward to be considered as a prodigy in her little circle; surrounded with fond and flattering friends, every avenue to truth is shut out; she has no opportunity of learning that her fame is derived not from her powers but her position; and that when an impartial critic shall have made all the necessary deductions, such as, that she is a neighbour, that she is a relation, that she

is a female, that she is young, that she has had no advantages, that she is pretty, perhaps; when her verses come to be stripped of all their extraneous appendages, and the fair author is driven off her 'vantage ground of partiality, sex, and favour, she will commonly sink to the level of ordinary capacities; while those more quiet women, who have meekly sat down in the humble shades of prose and prūdence, by a patient perseverance in rational studies, rise afterwards much higher in the scale of intellect, and acquire a much larger stock of sound knowledge, for far better purposes than mere display: — and though it may seem a contradiction, yet it will generally be found true, that girls who take to scribble are the least studious, the least reflecting, and the least rational; they early acquire a false confidence in their own unassisted powers; it becomes more gratifying to their natural vanity to be always pouring out their minds on paper, than to be drawing into them fresh ideas from richer sources. The original stock, small, perhaps, at first, is soon spent. The subsequent efforts grow more and more feeble, if the mind, which is continually exhausting itself, be not also continually replenished, till the latter compositions become little more than reproductions of the same ideas, and fainter copies of the same images, a little varied and modified, perhaps, and not a little diluted and enfeebled.

It will be necessary to combat vigilantly that favourite plea of lively ignorance, that study is an enemy to originality. Correct the judgment, while

you humble the vanity, of the young untaught pretender, by convincing her that those half-formed thoughts and undigested ideas, which she considers as proofs of her invention, prove only, that she wants taste and knowledge; that while conversation must polish, and reflection invigorate, her ideas, she must improve and enlarge them by the accession of various kinds of virtuous and elegant literature; and that the cultivated mind will repay with large interest the seeds sown in it by judicious study. Let it be observed, I am by no means *encouraging* young ladies to turn authors; I am only reminding them, that

Authors before they write should read;

I am only putting them in mind, that to be ignorant is not to be original.

These self-taught and self-dependent scribblers pant for the unmerited and unattainable praise of fancy and of genius, while they disdain the commendation of judgment, knowledge, and perseverance, which would probably be within their reach. To extort admiration, they are accustomed to boast of an impossible rapidity in composing; and while they insinuate how little time their performances cost them, they intend you should infer how perfect they might have made them had they condescended to the drudgery of application; but application with them implies defect of genius. They take superfluous pains to convince you that there was neither learning nor labour employed in the work for which they solicit your praise. Alas!

the judicious eye too soon perceives it! though it does *not* perceive that native strength and mother-wit, which, in works of real genius, make some amends for the negligence, which yet they do not justify. But instead of extolling these effusions for their facility, it would be kind in friends rather to blame them for their crudeness; and when the young candidates for fame are eager to prove in how short a time such a poem has been struck off, it would be well to regret either that they had not taken a longer time, or had refrained from writing at all. In the former case, the work would have been less defective, and in the latter, the writer would have discovered more humility and self-distrust.

A general capacity for knowledge, and the cultivation of the understanding at large, will always put a woman into the best state for directing her pursuits into those particular channels which her destination in life may afterwards require. But she should be carefully instructed that her talents are only a means to a still higher attainment, and that she is not to rest in them as an end; that merely to exercise them as instruments for the acquisition of fame and the promotion of pleasure is subversive of her delicacy as a woman, and contrary to the spirit of a Christian.

Study, therefore, is to be considered as the means of strengthening the mind and of fitting it for higher duties, just as exercise is to be considered as an instrument for strengthening the body for the same purpose; and the valetudina-

rian, who is religiously punctual in the observance of his daily rides to promote his health, and rests in that as an end, without so much as intending to make his improved health an instrument of increased usefulness, acts on the same low and selfish principle with her who reads merely for pleasure and for fame, without any design of devoting the more enlarged and invigorated mind to the glory of the Giver.

But there is one *human* consideration which would perhaps more effectually tend to damp in an aspiring woman the ardours of literary vanity — I speak not of real genius, though there the remark often applies — than any which she will derive from motives of humility, or propriety, or religion; which is, that in the judgment passed on her performances, she will have to encounter the mortifying circumstance of having her sex always taken into account, and her highest exertions will probably be received with the qualified approbation *that it is really extraordinary for a woman.* Men of learning, who are naturally disposed to estimate works in proportion as they appear to be the result of art, study, and institution, are inclined to consider even the happier performances of the other sex as the spontaneous productions of a fruitful but shallow soil, and to give them the same kind of praise which we bestow on certain salads, which often draw from us a sort of wondering commendation, not, indeed, as being worth much in themselves, but because, by the lightness of the earth, and a happy knack of the gardener, these indif-

ferent cresses spring up in a night, and therefore we are ready to wonder they are no worse.

As to men of sense, however, they need be the less hostile to the improvement of the other sex, as they themselves will be sure to be gainers by it; the enlargement of the female understanding being the most likely means to put an end to those petty and absurd contentions for equality which female smatterers so anxiously maintain. I say smatterers, for between the first class of both sexes the question is much more rarely and always more temperately agitated. Cooperation, and not competition, is, indeed, the clear principle we wish to see reciprocally adopted by those higher minds in each sex which really approximate the nearest to each other. The more a woman's understanding is improved, the more obviously she will discern that there can be no happiness in any society where there is a perpetual struggle for power; and the more her judgment is rectified, the more accurate views will she take of the station she was born to fill, and the more readily will she accommodate herself to it; while the most vulgar and ill-informed women are ever most inclined to be tyrants, and those always struggle most vehemently for power who, at the greatest distance from deserving it, would not fail to make the worst use of it when attained. Thus the weakest reasoners are always the most positive in debate; and the cause is obvious, for *they* are unavoidably driven to maintain their pretensions by violence, who want arguments and reasons to prove that they are in the right.

There is this singular difference between a woman vain of her wit, and a woman vain of her beauty; that the beauty, while she is anxiously alive to her own fame, is often indifferent enough about the beauty of other women; and provided she herself is sure of your admiration, she does not insist on your thinking that there is another handsome woman in the world: while she who is vain of her genius, more liberal at least in her vanity, is jealous for the honour of her whole sex, and contends for the equality of their pretensions as a body, in which she feels that her own are involved as an individual. The beauty vindicates her own rights, the wit the rights of women; the beauty fights for herself, the wit for a party; and while the more selfish though more moderate beauty

would but be Queen for life,

the public-spirited wit struggles to abrogate the Salique law of intellect, and to enthrone

a whole sex of Queens.

At the revival of letters in the sixteenth and the following century, the controversy about this equality was agitated with more warmth than wisdom; and the process was instituted and carried on, on the part of the female complainant, with that sort of acrimony which always raises a suspicion of the justice of any cause; for violence commonly implies doubt, and invective indicates weakness rather than strength. The novelty of that knowledge, which was then bursting out from

the dawn of a long dark night, kindled all the ardours of the female mind, and the ladies fought zealously for a portion of that renown which the reputation of learning was beginning to bestow. Besides their own pens, they had for their advocates all those needy authors who had any thing to hope from their power, their riches, or their influence; and so giddy did some of these literary ladies become by the adulation of their numerous panegyrists, that, through these repeated draughts of inebriating praise, they even lost their former moderate measure of sober-mindedness, and grew to despise the equality for which they had before contended, as a state below their merit, and unworthy of their acceptance. They now scorned to litigate for what they already thought they so obviously possessed, and nothing short of the palm of superiority was at length considered as adequate to their growing claims. When court ladies and princesses were the candidates, they could not long want champions to support their cause. By these champions female authorities were produced as if paramount to facts; quotations from these female authors were considered as proofs, and their point-blank assertions stood for solid and irrefragable arguments. In those parasites who offered this homage to female genius, the homage was the effect neither of truth, nor of justice, nor of conviction; it arose rather out of gratitude, or it was a reciprocation of flattery; it was sometimes vanity, it was often distress, which prompted the adulation; it was the want of a patroness, it was the

want of a dinner. When a lady, and especially as it then often happened, when a lady who was noble or royal sat with gratifying docility at the foot of a professor's chair; when she admired the philosopher, or took upon her to protect the theologian, whom his rivals among his own sex were tearing to pieces, what could the grateful professor or delighted theologian do less in return than make the apotheosis of her who had had the penetration to discern his merit, and the spirit to reward it? Thus, in fact, it was not so much *her* vanity as his own that he was often flattering, though she was the dupe of her more deep and designing panegyrist.

But it is a little unfortunate for the perpetuity of that fame which the encomiast had made over to his patroness, in the never-dying records of his verses and orations, that, in the revolution of a century or two, the very names of the flattered are now almost as little known as the works of the flatterers. *Their memorial is perished with them.** An instructive lesson, reminding us that whoever bestows or assumes a reputation, disproportioned to the merit of the claimant, will find that reputation as little durable as it is solid: for this literary warfare, which engaged such troops of the second-hand authors of the age in question in such continual skirmishes, and not a few pitched battles; which provoked so much rancour, so many volumes, and so little wit; so much vanity, so much flattery, and so much invective, produced no useful

* See Brantome, Père le Moine, Mons. Thomas, &c.

or lasting effect. Those who promised themselves that their names would outlive "one half of round eternity," did not reach the end of the century in which the boast was made; and those who prodigally offered the incense, and those who greedily snuffed up its fumes, are buried in the same blank oblivion!

But when the temple of Janus seemed to have been closed, or when, at worst, the peace was only occasionally broken by a slight and random shot from the hand of some single straggler, it appears that though open rebellion had ceased, yet the female claim had not been renounced; it had only, if we may change the metaphor, lain in abeyance. The contest has recently been revived with added fury, and with multiplied exactions; for whereas the ancient demand was merely a kind of imaginary prerogative, a speculative importance, a mere titular right, a shadowy claim to a few unreal acres of Parnassian territory; the revived contention has taken a more serious turn, and brings forward political as well as intellectual pretensions; and among the innovations of this innovating period, the imposing term of *rights* has been produced to sanctify the claim of our female pretenders, with a view not only to rekindle in the minds of women a presumptuous vanity, dishonourable to their sex, but produced with a view to excite in their hearts an impious discontent with the post which God has assigned them in this world. *

* This was written soon after the publication of a work intitled "The Rights of Women."

But *they* little understand the true interests of woman who would lift her from the important duties of her allotted station, to fill, with fantastic dignity, a loftier but less appropriate niche. Nor do they understand her true happiness, who seek to annihilate distinctions from which she derives advantages, and to attempt innovations which would depreciate her real value. Each sex has its proper excellences, which would be lost were they melted down into the common character by the fusion of the new philosophy. Why should we do away distinctions which increase the mutual benefits and enhance the satisfactions of life? Whence, but by carefully preserving the original marks of difference, stamped by the hand of the Creator, would be derived the superior advantage of mixed society? Is either sex so abounding in perfection, as to be independent on the other for improvement? Have men no need to have their rough angles filed off, and their harshnesses and asperities smoothed and polished by assimilating with beings of more softness and refinement? Are the ideas of women naturally so *very* judicious, are their principles so *invincibly* firm, are their views so *perfectly* correct, are their judgments so *completely* exact, that there is occasion for no additional weight, no superadded strength, no increased clearness, none of that enlargement of mind, none of that additional invigoration, which may be derived from the aids of the stronger sex? What identity could advantageously supersede such an enlivening opposition, such an interesting variety of character?

Is it not, then, more wise, as well as more honourable, to move contentedly in the plain path which Providence has obviously marked out to the sex, and in which custom has for the most part rationally confirmed them, rather than to stray awkwardly, unbecomingly, and unsuccessfully in a forbidden road? Is it not desirable to be the lawful possessors of a more limited domestic territory, rather than the turbulent usurpers of a wider foreign empire? to be good originals, instead of bad imitators? to be the best thing of one's own kind, rather than an inferior thing, even if it were of a higher kind? to be excellent women, rather than indifferent men?

Is the author, then, undervaluing her own sex? —No. It is her zeal for their true *interests* which leads her to oppose their imaginary *rights*. It is her regard for their happiness which makes her endeavour to cure them of a feverish thirst for a fame as unattainable as inappropriate; to guard them against an ambition as little becoming the delicacy of their female character as the meekness of their religious profession. A little Christian humility and sober-mindedness are worth all the empty renown which was ever obtained by the misapplied energies of the sex; it is worth all the wild metaphysical discussion which has ever been obtruded under the name of reason and philosophy; which has unsettled the peace of vain women, and forfeited the respect of reasonable men; and the most elaborate definition of ideal rights, and the most hardy measures for attaining

them, are of less value in the eyes of a truly amiable woman, than "that meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Natural propensities best mark the designations of Providence as to their application. The fin was not more clearly bestowed on the fish that he should swim, nor the wing given to the bird that he should fly, than superior strength of body and a firmer texture of mind were given to man, that he might preside in the deep and daring scenes of action and of council; in the complicated arts of government, in the contention of arms, in the intricacies and depths of science, in the bustle of commerce, and in those professions which demand a higher reach and a wider range of powers. The true value of woman is not diminished by the imputation of inferiority in those talents which do not belong to her, of those qualities in which her claim to excellence does not consist. She has other requisites, better adapted to answer the end and purposes of her being, from "HIM who does all things well;" who suits the agent to the action; who accommodates the instrument to the work.

Let not, then, aspiring, because ill-judging, woman view with pining envy the keen satirist, hunting vice through all the doublings and windings of the heart; the sagacious politician, leading senates, and directing the fate of empires; the acute lawyer, detecting the obliquities of fraud; and the skilful dramatist, exposing the pretensions of folly; but let her ambition be consoled by reflecting, that those who thus excel, to all that

Nature bestows and books can teach, must add besides that consummate knowledge of the world to which a delicate woman has no fair avenues, and which, even if she could attain, she would never be supposed to have come honestly by.

In almost all that comes under the description of polite letters, in all that captivates by vivid imagery or warms by just and affecting sentiment, women are excellent. They possess in a high degree that delicacy and quickness of perception, and that nice discernment between the beautiful and defective which comes under the denomination of taste. Both in composition and in action they excel in details; but they do not so much generalise their ideas as men, nor do their minds seize a great subject with so large a grasp. They are acute observers, and accurate judges of life and manners, as far as their own sphere of observation extends, but they describe a smaller circle. A woman sees the world, as it were, from a little elevation in her own garden, whence she makes an exact survey of home scenes, but takes not in that wider range of distant prospects which he who stands on a loftier eminence commands. Women have a certain *tact* which often enables them to feel what is just more instantaneously than they can define it. They have an intuitive penetration into character bestowed on them by Providence, like the sensitive and tender organs of some timid animals, as a kind of natural guard, to warn of the approach of danger beings who are often called to act defensively.

In summing up the evidence, if I may so speak,

of the different capacities of the sexes, one may venture, perhaps, to assert, that women have equal *parts*, but are inferior in *wholeness* of mind, in the integral understanding: that though a superior woman may possess single faculties in equal perfection, yet there is commonly a juster proportion in the mind of a superior man: that if women have in an equal degree the faculty of fancy which creates images, and the faculty of memory which collects and stores ideas; they seem not to possess in equal measure the faculty of comparing, combining, analysing, and separating these ideas; that deep and patient thinking which goes to the bottom of a subject, nor that power of arrangement which knows how to link a thousand connected ideas in one dependent train, without losing sight of the original idea out of which the rest grow, and on which they all hang. The female, too, wanting steadiness in her intellectual pursuits, is perpetually turned aside by her characteristic tastes and feelings. Woman, in the career of genius, is the Atalanta, who will risk losing the race by running out of her road to pick up the golden apple; while her male competitor, without, perhaps, possessing greater natural strength or swiftness, will more certainly attain his object by direct pursuit, by being less exposed to the seductions of extraneous beauty, and will win the race, not by excelling in speed, but by despising the bait.*

* What indisposes even reasonable women to concede in these points is, that the weakest man instantly lays hold on the concession; and on the mere ground of sex, plumes him-

Here it may be justly enough retorted, that, as it is allowed the education of women is so defective, the alleged inferiority of their minds may be accounted for on that ground more justly than by ascribing it to their natural make. And, indeed, there is so much truth in the remark, that till women shall be more reasonably educated, and till the native growth of their mind shall cease to be stinted and cramped, we have no juster ground for pronouncing that their understanding has already reached its highest attainable point, than the Chinese would have for affirming that their women have attained to the greatest possible perfection in walking, while the first care is, during their infancy, to cripple their feet. At least, till the female sex are more carefully instructed, this question will always remain as undecided as to the *degree* of difference between the masculine and feminine understanding, as the question between the understandings of blacks and whites; for until men and women, as well as Africans and Europeans, are put more nearly on a par in the cultivation of their minds, the shades of distinction, whatever they be, between their native abilities can never be fairly ascertained.

And when we see (and who will deny that we see it frequently?) so many women nobly rising from under all the pressure of a disadvantageous education and a defective system of society, and

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self on his own individual superiority; conceitedly inferring that the silliest man is superior to the first rate woman.

exhibiting the most unambiguous marks of a vigorous understanding, a correct judgment, and a sterling piety, it reminds us of those shining lights which have now and then burst out through all the "darkness visible" of the Romish church, have disencumbered themselves from the gloom of ignorance, shaken off the fetters of prejudice, and with a noble energy risen superior to all the errors of a corrupt theology.

But whatever characteristical distinctions may exist; whatever inferiority may be attached to woman from the slighter frame of her body, or the more circumscribed powers of her mind; from a less systematic education, and from the subordinate station she is called to fill in life; there is one great and leading circumstance which raises her importance, and even establishes her equality. *Christianity* has exalted women to true and undisputed dignity; in Christ Jesus, as there is neither "rich nor poor," "bond nor free," so there is neither "male nor female." In the view of that immortality, which is brought to light by the Gospel, she has no superior. "Women," — to borrow the idea of an excellent prelate, — "make up one half of the human race, equally with men redeemed by the blood of Christ." In this their true dignity consists; here their best pretensions rest; here their highest claims are allowed.

All disputes then for pre-eminence between the sexes have only for their object the poor precedence of a few short years, the attention of

which would be better devoted to the duties of life and the interests of eternity.

And as the final hope of the female sex is equal, so are their present means, perhaps, more favourable, and their opportunities, often, less obstructed than those of the other sex. In their Christian course women have every superior advantage, whether we consider the natural make of their minds, their leisure for acquisition in youth, or their subsequently less exposed mode of life. Their hearts are naturally soft and flexible, open to impressions of love and gratitude; their feelings tender and lively; all these are favourable to the cultivation of a devotional spirit. Yet, while we remind them of these native benefits, they will do well to be on their guard lest this very softness and ductility lay them more open to the seductions of temptation and error.

They have in the native constitution of their minds, as well as from the relative situations they are called to fill, a certain sense of attachment and dependence, which is peculiarly favourable to religion. They feel, perhaps, more intimately the want of a strength which is not their own. Christianity brings that superinduced strength; it comes in aid of their conscious weakness, and offers the only true counterpoise to it. "Woman, be thou healed of thine infirmity," is still the heart-cheering language of a gracious Saviour.

Women also bring to the study of Christianity fewer of those prejudices which persons of the other sex too often early contract. Men, from

their classical education, acquire a strong partiality for the manners of pagan antiquity, and the documents of pagan philosophy; this, together with the impure taint caught from the loose descriptions of their poets, and the licentious language even of their historians, in whom we reasonably look for more gravity, often weakens the good impressions of young men, and at least confuses their ideas of piety by mixing them with so much heterogeneous matter. Their very spirits are imbued all the week with the impure follies of a depraved mythology; and it is well if even on Sundays they can hear of the "true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." While women, though struggling with the same natural corruptions, have commonly less knowledge to unknow, and fewer schemes to unlearn; they have not to shake off the pride of system, and to disencumber their minds from the shackles of favourite theories; they do not bring from the porch or the academy any "oppositions of science" to obstruct their reception of those pure doctrines taught on the Mount; doctrines which ought to find a readier entrance into minds uninfected with the pride of the school of Zeno, or the libertinism of that of Epicurus.

And as women are naturally more affectionate than fastidious, they are likely both to read and to hear with a less critical spirit than men; they will not be on the watch to detect errors, so much as to gather improvement; they have seldom that hardness which is acquired by dealing deeply in books of controversy; but are more inclined to

the perusal of works which quicken the devotional feelings, than to such as awaken a spirit of doubt and scepticism. They are less disposed to consider the compositions they read as materials on which to ground objections and answers, than as helps to faith and rules of life. With these advantages, however, they should also bear in mind that their more easily received impressions being often less abiding, and their reason less open to conviction from the strong evidences which exist in favour of the truth of Christianity, "they ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to the things which they have heard, lest at any time they should let them slip." Women are also, from their domestic habits, in possession of more leisure and tranquillity for religious pursuits, as well as secured from those difficulties and strong temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world. Their lives are more regular and uniform, less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shock of opinions, and the opposition of interests which divide society and convulse the world.

If we have denied them the possession of talents which might lead them to excel as lawyers, they are preserved from the peril of having their principles warped by that too indiscriminate defence of right and wrong, to which the professors of the law are exposed. If we should question their title to eminence as mathematicians, they are happily exempt from the danger to which men devoted to that science are said to be liable, namely, that of

looking for demonstration on subjects which, by their very nature, are incapable of affording it. If they are less conversant in the powers of nature, the structure of the human frame, and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies, than philosophers, physicians, and astronomers, they are, however, delivered from the error into which many of each of these have sometimes fallen, — I mean from the fatal habit of resting in second causes, instead of referring all to the first; instead of making "the heavens declare the glory of God, and proclaim his handy-work;" instead of concluding, when they observe "how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, marvellous are thy works, O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well."

And let the weaker sex take comfort, that in their very exemption from privileges, which they are sometimes foolishly disposed to envy, consists not only their security but their happiness. If they enjoy not the distinctions of public life and high offices, do they not escape the responsibility attached to them, and the mortification of being dismissed from them? If they have no voice in deliberative assemblies, do they not avoid the load of duty inseparably connected with such privileges? Preposterous pains have been taken to excite in women an uneasy jealousy, that their talents are neither rewarded with public honours nor emoluments in life; nor with inscriptions, statues, and mausoleums after death. It has been absurdly represented to them as a hardship, that, while they are expected to perform duties, they

must yet be contented to relinquish honours; that they must unjustly be compelled to renounce fame, while they must sedulously labour to deserve it.*

But for Christian women to act on the low views suggested to them by their ill-judging panegyrists; for Christian women to look up with a giddy head and a throbbing heart to honours and remunerations so little suited to the wants and capacities of an immortal spirit, would be no less ridiculous than if Christian heroes should look back with envy on the old pagan rewards of ovations, oak-garlands, parsley-crowns, and laurel-wreaths. The Christian hope more than reconciles Christian women to these petty privations, by substituting a nobler prize for their ambition, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" by substituting for that popular and fluctuating voice, which may cry "Hosanna" and "Crucify" in a breath, that "favour of God which is eternal life."

If women should lament it as a disadvantage attached to their sex, that their character is of so delicate a texture as to be sullied by the slightest breath of calumny, and that the stain once received is indelible; yet, are they not led by that very circumstance to shrink, as if instinctively, from all those irregularities to which the loss of character is so certainly expected to be attached, and to shun, with keener circumspection, the most distant approach towards the confines of danger? Let them not lament it as a hardship, but account

* "Rights of Women."

it to be a privilege, that the delicacy of their sex impels them more scrupulously to avoid the very "*appearance* of evil;" let them not regret that the consciousness of their danger serves to secure their purity, by placing them at a greater distance, and in a more deep intrenchment, from the evil itself.

Though it be one main object of this little work rather to lower than to raise any desire of celebrity in the female heart, yet I would awaken it to a just sensibility to honest fame: I would call on women to reflect that our religion has not only made them heirs to a blessed immortality hereafter, but has greatly raised them in the scale of being here, by lifting them to an importance in society unknown to the most polished ages of antiquity. The religion of Christ has even bestowed a degree of renown on the sex beyond what any other religion ever did. Perhaps there are hardly so many virtuous women (for I reject the long catalogue whom their vices have transferred from oblivion to infamy) named in all the pages of Greek or Roman history as are handed down to eternal fame in a few of those short chapters with which the great Apostle to the Gentiles has concluded his epistles to his converts. Of "devout and honourable women," the sacred Scriptures record "not a few." Some of the most affecting scenes, the most interesting transactions, and the most touching conversations which are recorded of the Saviour of the world passed with women. *Their* examples have sup-

plied some of the most eminent instances of faith and love: *they* are the first remarked as having "ministered to him of their substance:" *theirs* was the praise of not abandoning their despised Redeemer when he was led to execution, and under all the hopeless circumstances of his ignominious death; *they* appear to have been the *last* attending at his tomb, and the *first* on the morning when he arose from it: *theirs* was the privilege of receiving the earliest consolation from their risen Lord: *theirs* was the honour of being first commissioned to announce his glorious resurrection; and even to have furnished heroic confessors, devoted saints, and unshrinking martyrs to the church of Christ, has not been the exclusive honour of the bolder sex.

CHAP. XV.

CONVERSATION. — HINTS SUGGESTED ON THE SUBJECT. — ON THE TEMPERS AND DISPOSITIONS TO BE INTRODUCED IN IT. — ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED. — VANITY UNDER VARIOUS SHAPES THE CAUSE OF THOSE ERRORS.

THE sexes will naturally desire to appear to each other such as each believes the other will best like: their conversation will act reciprocally; and each sex will wish to appear more or less rational as they perceive it will more or less recommend them to the other. It is, therefore, to be regretted that many men, even of distinguished sense and learning, are too apt to consider the society of ladies as a scene in which they are rather to rest their understandings than to exercise them; while ladies, in return, are too much addicted to make their court by lending themselves to this spirit of trifling: they often avoid making use of what abilities they have, and affect to talk below their natural and acquired powers of mind, considering it as a tacit and welcome flattery to the understanding of men to renounce the exercise of their own.

Now, since taste and principles thus mutually operate, men, by keeping up conversation to its proper standard, would not only call into exercise the powers of mind which women actually possess,

but would even awaken in them new energies which they do not know they possess; and men of sense would find their account in doing this, for their own talents would be more highly rated by companions who were better able to appreciate them, and they would be receiving as well as imparting improvement: and, on the other hand, if young women found it did not often recommend them in the eyes of those whom they most wish to please to be frivolous and superficial, they would become more sedulous in correcting their own habits. Whenever fashionable women indicate a relish for instructive conversation, men will not be apt to hazard what is vain or unprofitable; much less will they ever presume to bring forward what is loose or corrupt, where some signal has not been previously given that it will be acceptable, or, at least, that it will be pardoned.

Ladies commonly bring into company minds already too much relaxed by petty pursuits, rather than overstrained by intense application. The littleness of the employments in which they are usually engaged does not so exhaust their spirits as to make them stand in need of that relaxation from company, which severe application or overwhelming business makes requisite for studious or public men. The due consideration of this circumstance might serve to bring the sexes more nearly on a level in society, and each might meet the other half way; for that degree of lively and easy conversation which is a necessary refreshment to the learned and the busy, would not decrease

in pleasantness by being made of so rational a cast as would yet somewhat raise the minds of women, who commonly seek society as a scene of pleasure, not as a refuge from intense thought or exhausting labour.

It is a disadvantage even to those women who keep the best company, that it is unhappily almost established into a system, by the other sex, to postpone every thing like instructive discourse till the ladies are withdrawn — their retreat serving as a kind of signal for the exercise of intellect. And in the few cases in which it happens that any important discussion takes place in their presence, they are for the most part considered as having little interest in serious subjects. Strong truths, whenever such happen to be addressed to them, are either diluted with flattery, or kept back in part, or softened to their taste; or if the ladies express a wish for information on any point, they are put off with a compliment instead of a reason. They are reminded of their beauty when they are seeking to inform their understanding, and are considered as beings who must be contented to behold every thing through a false medium, and who are not expected to see and to judge of things as they really exist.

Do we, then, wish to see the ladies, whose want of opportunities leaves them so incompetent on many points, and the modesty of whose sex ought never to allow them even to be as shining as they are able, — do we wish to see them take the lead

in metaphysical disquisitions? Do we wish them to plunge into the depths of theological polemics,

"And find no end in wandering mazes lost?"

Do we wish them to revive the animosities of the Bangorian controversy, or to decide the process between the Jesuits and the five propositions of Jansenius? Do we wish to enthrone them in the professor's chair, to deliver oracles, harangues, and dissertations?—to weigh the merits of every new production in the scales of Quintilian, or to regulate the unities of dramatic composition *by Aristotle's clock?* Or, renouncing those foreign aids, do we desire to behold them vain of a native independence of soul, inflated with their original powers, labouring to strike out sparks of wit, with a restless anxiety to shine, which generally fails, and with an anxious affectation to please, which never pleases?

"Discurs de bons mots, fades caractères."

All this be far from them!—But we *do* wish to see the conversation of well-bred women rescued from vapid common-place, from uninteresting tattle, from trite and hackneyed communications, from frivolous earnestness, from false sensibility, from a warm interest about things of no moment, and an indifference to topics the most important; from a cold vanity, from the ill-concealed overflowings of self-love, exhibiting itself under the smiling mask of an engaging flattery, and from all the factitious manners of artificial intercourse. We *do* wish to see the time passed in polished and intelligent so-

ciety, considered among the beneficial as well as the pleasant portions of our existence, and not consigned over, as it too frequently is, to premeditated trifling, to empty dulness, to unmeaning levity, to systematic unprofitableness. Let me not, however, be misunderstood: it is not meant to prescribe that ladies should affect to discuss lofty subjects, so much as to suggest that they should bring good sense, simplicity, precision, and truth to the discussion of those common subjects, of which, after all, both the business and the conversation of mankind must be in a great measure made up.

It is too well known how much the dread of imputed pedantry keeps off every thing that verges towards *learned*, and the terror of imputed enthusiasm frightens away any thing that approaches to *serious* conversation; so that the two topics which peculiarly distinguish us as rational and immortal beings, are, by general consent, in a good degree banished from the society of rational and immortal creatures. But we might almost as consistently give up the comforts of fire because a few persons have been burnt, and the benefit of water because some others have been drowned, as relinquish the enjoyments of intellectual and the blessings of religious intercourse, because the learned world has sometimes been infested with pedants, and the religious world with fanatics.

As in the momentous times in which we live it is next to impossible to pass an evening in company but the talk will so inevitably revert to poli-

tics, that, without any premeditated design, every one present shall infallibly be able to find out to which side the other inclines; why, in the far higher concern of eternal things, should we so carefully shun every offered opportunity of bearing even a casual testimony to the part we espouse in religion? Why, while we make it a sort of point of conscience to leave no doubt on the mind of a stranger whether we adopt the party of Pitt or Fox, shall we choose to leave it very problematical whether we belong to God or Baal? Why, in religion, as well as in politics, should we not act like people who, having their all at stake, cannot forbear now and then adverting for a moment to the object of their grand concern, and dropping, at least, an incidental intimation of the side to which they belong?

Even the news of the day, in such an eventful period as the present, may lead frequent occasions to a woman of principle to declare, without parade, her faith in a moral Governor of the world; her trust in a particular Providence; her belief in the Divine Omnipotence; her confidence in the power of God, in educing good from evil, in his employing wicked nations, not as favourites but instruments; her persuasion that present success is no proof of the Divine favour; in short, some intimation that she is not ashamed to declare that her mind is under the influence of Christian faith; that she is steadily governed by an unalterable principle, of which no authority is too great to make her ashamed, which no occasion is too trivial

to call into exercise. A general concurrence, in habitually exhibiting this spirit of decided faith and holy trust, would inconceivably discourage that pert and wakeful infidelity which is ever on the watch to produce itself; and, as we have already observed, if women, who derive authority from their rank or talents, did but reflect how their sentiments are repeated, and how their authority is quoted, they would be so on their guard, that general society might become a scene of profitable communication and common improvement; and the young, who are looking for models on which to fashion themselves, would become ashamed and afraid of exhibiting any thing like levity, or scepticism, or profaneness.

Let it be understood, that it is not meant to intimate that serious subjects should make up the bulk of conversation: this, as it is impossible, would also often be improper. It is not intended to suggest that they should be abruptly introduced or unsuitably prolonged; but only that they should not be systematically shunned, nor the brand of fanaticism be fixed on the person who, with whatever propriety, hazards the introduction of such subjects. It is evident, however, that this general dread of serious topics arises a good deal from an ignorance of the true nature of Christianity: people avoid it on the principle expressed by the vulgar phrase of the danger of playing with edge-tools. They conceive of religion as something which involves controversy and dispute; something either melancholy or mischievous; some-

thing of an inflammatory nature, which is to stir up ill humours and hatred: they consider it as a question which has two sides, as of a sort of party-business, which sets friends at variance. So much is this notion adopted, that I have seen announced two works of considerable merit, in which it was stipulated as an attraction, that the subject of religion, as being likely to excite anger and party distinctions, should be carefully excluded. Such is the worldly idea of the spirit of that religion, whose direct object it was to bring "peace and good-will to men!"

Women too little live or converse up to the standard of their understandings; and, however we have deprecated affectation or pedantry, let it be remembered, that, both in reading and conversing, the understanding gains more by stretching than stooping. If, by exerting itself, it may not attain to all it desires, yet it will be sure to gain something. The mind, by always applying itself to objects below its own level, contracts its dimensions, and shrinks itself to the size, and lowers itself to the level, of the object about which it is conversant; while the understanding, which is active and aspiring, expands and raises itself, grows stronger by exercise, larger by diffusion, and richer by communication.

But the taste of general society is not favourable to improvement. The seriousness with which the most frivolous subjects are agitated, and the levity with which the most serious are despatched, bear a pretty exact proportion to each other. Society,

too, is a sort of magic lantern — the scene is perpetually shifting.. In this incessant change we must

" Catch, ere she fall, the Cynthia of the minute ; " —

and the fashion of the present minute, evanescent, probably, like its rapid precursors, while in many it leads to the cultivation of real knowledge, has also not unfrequently led even the gay and idle to the affectation of mixing a sprinkling of science with the mass of dissipation. The ambition of appearing to be well-informed breaks out even in those triflers who will not spare time from their pleasurable pursuits sufficient for acquiring that knowledge, of which, however, the reputation is so desirable. A little smattering of philosophy often dignifies the pursuits of their day, without rescuing them from the vanities of the night. A course of lectures, that admirable assistant for enlightening the understanding, is not seldom resorted to as a means to substitute the appearance of knowledge for the fatigue of application. But where this valuable help is attended merely like any other public exhibition, as a fashionable pursuit, and is not furthered by correspondent reading at home, it often serves to set off the reality of ignorance with the affectation of skill. But, instead of producing in conversation a few reigning scientific terms, with a familiarity and readiness which

" Amaze the unlearn'd, and make the learned smile,"

would it not be more modest, even for those who are better informed, to avoid the common use of technical terms, whenever the idea can be as well conveyed without them? For it argues no real ability to know the *names* of tools—the ability lies in knowing their *use*; and while it is in the thing, and not in the term, that real knowledge consists, the charge of pedantry is attached to the use of the term, which would not attach to the knowledge of the science.

In the faculty of speaking well, ladies have such a happy promptitude of turning their slender advantages to account, that there are many who, though they have never been taught a rule of syntax, yet, by a quick facility in profiting from the best books and the best company, hardly ever violate one; and who often exhibit an elegant and perspicuous arrangement of style, without having studied any of the laws of composition. Every kind of knowledge which appears to be the result of observation, reflection, and natural taste, sits gracefully on women. Yet, on the other hand, it sometimes happens that ladies of no contemptible natural parts are too ready to produce, not only pedantic expressions, but crude and unfounded notions; and still oftener to bring forward obvious and hackneyed remarks, which float on the very surface of a subject, with the imposing air of recent invention, and all the vanity of conscious discovery. This is because their acquirements have not been worked into their minds by early instruction: what knowledge they have gotten stands out

as it were above the very surface of their minds, like the *appliquée* of the embroiderer, instead of having been interwoven with the growth of the piece, so as to have become a part of the stuff. They did not, like men, acquire what they know while the texture was forming. Perhaps no better preventive could be devised for this literary vanity than *early* instruction: that woman would be less likely to be vain of her knowledge who did not remember the time when she was ignorant. Knowledge that is *burnt in*, if I may so speak, is seldom obtrusive, rarely impertinent.

Their reading also has probably consisted much in abridgments from larger works, as was observed in a former chapter: this makes a readier talker, but a shallower thinker, than the perusal of books of more bulk. By these scanty sketches, their critical spirit has been excited, while their critical powers have not been formed; for in those crippled mutilations they have seen nothing of that just proportion of parts, that skilful arrangement of the plan, and that artful distribution of the subject, which, while they prove the master-hand of the writer, serve also to form the taste of the reader, far more than a disjointed skeleton, or a beautiful feature or two, can do. The instruction of women is also too much drawn from the scanty and penurious sources of short writings of the essay kind. This, when it comprises the best part of a person's reading, makes a smatterer and spoils a scholar; for though it supplies current talk, yet it does not make a full mind; it does not

furnish a storehouse of materials to stock the understanding, neither does it accustom the mind to any trains of reflection; for the subjects, besides being each succinctly, and, on account of this brevity, superficially treated, are distinct and disconnected: they arise out of no concatenation of ideas, nor any dependent series of deduction. Yet on this pleasant but desultory reading the mind, which has not been trained to severer exercise, loves to repose itself in a sort of creditable indolence, instead of stretching its energies in the wholesome labour of consecutive investigation. *

I am not discouraging study at a late period of life, or even censuring slender knowledge. Information is good, at whatever period and in whatever degree it be acquired: but in such cases it should be attended with peculiar humility, and the new possessor should bear in mind that what is fresh to her has been long known to others; and she should, therefore, be aware of advancing as novel that which is common, and obtruding as rare that which every body possesses. Some ladies are eager to exhibit proofs of their reading, though at the expense of their judgment, and will introduce in conversation quotations quite irrelevant to the matter in hand, because they happen at the instant

* The writer cannot be supposed desirous of depreciating the value of those many beautiful periodical essays which adorn our language. But, perhaps, it might be better to regale the mind with them singly, at different times, than to read, at the same sitting, a multitude of short pieces on dissimilar and unconnected topics, *by way of getting through the book*.

to recur to their recollection, or were, perhaps, found in the book they have just been reading. Unappropriate quotations or strained analogy may show reading, but they do not show taste. That just and happy allusion which knows by a word how to awaken a corresponding image, or to excite in the hearer the idea which fills the mind of the speaker, shows less pedantry and more taste than bare citations; and a mind imbued with elegant knowledge will inevitably betray the opulence of its resources, even on topics which do not relate to science or literature. It is the union of parts and acquirements, of spirit and modesty, which produces the indefinable charm of conversation. Well-informed persons will easily be discovered to have read the best books, though they are not always detailing lists of authors; for a muster-roll of names may be learnt from the catalogue as well as from the library. Though honey owes its exquisite taste to the fragrance of the sweetest flowers, yet the skill of the little artificer appears in this, that the delicious stores are so admirably worked up, and there is such a due proportion observed in mixing them, that the perfection of the whole consists in its *not* tasting individually of the rose, the jessamine, the carnation, or any of those sweets of the very essence of all which it is compounded. Thus, true judgment will discover the infusion which true modesty will not display; and even common topics passing through a cultivated understanding borrow a flavour of its richness. A power of apt selection is more valuable than any

power of general retention; and an apposite remark, which shoots straight to the point, demands a higher capacity of mind than an hundred simple acts of memory; for the business of the memory is only to store up materials which the understanding is to mix and work up with its native faculties, and which the judgment is to bring out and apply. But young women who have more vivacity than sense, and more vanity than vivacity, often risk the charge of absurdity to escape that of ignorance, and will even compare two authors who are totally unlike, rather than miss the occasion to show that they have read both.

Among the arts to spoil conversation some ladies possess that of suddenly diverting it from the channel in which it was beneficially flowing; because some *word* used by the person who was speaking has accidentally struck out a new train of thinking in their own minds, and not because the general *idea* expressed has struck out a corresponding idea, which sort of collision is indeed the way of eliciting the true fire. Young ladies, whose sprightliness has not been disciplined by a correct education, consider how things may be prettily said, rather than how they may be prudently or seasonably spoken; and willingly hazard being thought wrong, or rash, or vain, for the chance of being reckoned pleasant. The graces of rhetoric captivate them more than the justest deductions of reason; when they have no *arms* they use *flowers*; and to repel an argument, they arm themselves with a metaphor. Those who do

not aim so high as eloquence are often surprised that you refuse to accept of a prejudice instead of a reason; they are apt to take up with a probability instead of a demonstration, and cheaply put you off with an assertion, when you are requiring a proof. The mode of education which renders them light in assumption, and superficial in reasoning, renders them also impatient of opposition; and if they happen to possess beauty, and to be vain of it, they may be tempted to consider that this is an additional proof of their being always in the right. In this case, they will not ask you to submit your judgment to the force of their argument, so much as to the authority of their charms.

The same fault in the mind, strengthened by the same error, a neglected education, leads lively women often to pronounce on a question without examining it: on any given point they seldomer *doubt* than men; not because they are more clear-sighted, but because they have not been accustomed to look into a subject long enough to discover its depths and its intricacies; and not discerning its difficulties, they conclude that it has none. Is it a contradiction to say, that they seem at once to be quick-sighted and short-sighted? What they see at all, they commonly see at once; a little difficulty discourages them; and, having caught a hasty glimpse of a subject, they rush to this conclusion, that either there is no more to be seen, or that what is behind will not pay them for the trouble of searching. They pursue their ob-

ject eagerly, but not regularly; rapidly, but not pertinaciously; for they want that obstinate patience of investigation which grows stouter by repulse. What they have not attained, they do not believe exists; what they cannot seize at once, they persuade themselves is not worth having.

Is a subject of moment started in company? While the more sagacious are deliberating on its difficulties, and viewing it under all its aspects, in order to form a competent judgment before they decide, you will often find the most superficial woman present determine the matter without hesitation. Not seeing the perplexities in which the question is involved, she wonders at the want of penetration in the man whose very penetration keeps him silent. She secretly despises the dull perception and slow decision of him who is patiently *untying* the knot which she fancies she exhibits more dexterity by *cutting*. By this shallow sprightliness, of which vanity is commonly the radical principle, the most ignorant person in the company leads the conversation, while he whose opinion was best worth having is discouraged from delivering it, and an important subject is dismissed without discussion, by inconsequent flippancy and voluble rashness. It is this abundance of florid talk, from superficial matter, which has brought on so many of the sex the charge of *inverting* the Apostle's precept, and of being *swift* to *speak*, *slow* to *hear*.

If the great Roman orator could observe, that silence was so important a part of conversation,

that "there was not only an art but an eloquence in it," how peculiarly does the remark apply to the modesty of youthful females! But the silence of listless and vapid ignorance, and the animated silence of sparking intelligence, are two things almost as obviously distinct as the wisdom and the folly of the tongue. An inviolable and marked attention may show that a woman is pleased with a subject, and an illuminated countenance may prove that she understands it, almost as unequivocally as language itself could do; and this, with a modest question, which indicates at once rational curiosity and becoming diffidence, is in many cases as large a share of the conversation as it is decorous for feminine delicacy to take. It is also as flattering an encouragement as men of sense and politeness require, for pursuing useful topics in the presence of women, which they would be more disposed to do, did they oftener gain by it the attention which it is natural to wish to excite; and did women themselves discover that desire of improvement which liberal-minded men are pleased with communicating.

Yet do we not sometimes see an impatience to be heard (nor is it a *feminine* failing only) which good breeding can scarcely subdue? And even when these incorrigible talkers are compelled to be quiet, is it not evident that they are not silent because they are listening to what is said, but because they are thinking of what they themselves shall say when they can seize the first lucky interval for which they are so narrowly watching?

The very turn of their countenance betrays that they do not take the slightest degree of interest in any thing that is said by others, except with a view to lie in wait for any little chasm in the discourse, on which they may lay hold, and give vent to their own overflowing vanity.

But conversation must not be considered as a stage for the display of our talents so much as a field for the exercise and improvement of our virtues; as a means for promoting the glory of our Creator, and the good and happiness of our fellow-creatures. Well-bred and intelligent Chrisians are not, when they join in society, to consider themselves as entering the lists like intellectual prize-fighters, in order to exhibit their own vigour and dexterity, to discomfit their adversary, and to bear away the palm of victory. Truth and not triumph should be the invariable object; and there are few occasions in life, in which we are more unremittingly called upon to watch ourselves narrowly, and to resist the assaults of various temptations, than in conversation. Vanity, jealousy, envy, misrepresentation, resentment, disdain, levity, impatience, insincerity, and pride, will in turn solicit to be gratified. Constantly to struggle against the desire of being thought more wise, more witty, and more knowing, than those with whom we associate, demands the incessant exertion of Christian vigilance; a vigilance which the generality are far from suspecting to be at all necessary in the intercourse of common society. On the contrary, cheerful conversation is rather considered as an

exemption and release from watchfulness, than as an additional obligation to it. But a circumspect soldier of Christ will never be off his post; even when he is not called to public combat by the open assaults of his great spiritual enemy, he must still be acting as a centinel; for the dangers of an ordinary Christian will arise more from these little skirmishes, which are daily happening in the warfare of human life, than from those pitched battles which more rarely occur, and for which he will probably think it sufficient to be armed.

But society, as was observed before, is not a stage on which to throw down our gauntlet, and prove our own prowess by the number of falls we give to our adversary; so far from it, true good breeding, as well as Christianity, considers as an indispensable requisite for conversation, the disposition to bring forward to notice any talent in others, which their own modesty, or conscious inferiority, would lead them to keep back. To do this with effect requires a penetration exercised to discern merit, and a generous candour which delights in drawing it out. There are few who cannot converse tolerably on some one topic: what that is, we should try to discover, and in general introduce that topic, though to the suppression of any one on which we ourselves are supposed to excel; and however superior we may be in other respects to the persons in question, we may, perhaps, in that particular point, improve by them: or if we do not gain information, we shall at least gain a wholesome exercise to our humility

and self-denial; we shall be restraining our own impetuosity; we shall, if we take this course on just occasions only, and so as to beware lest we gratify the vanity of others, be giving confidence to a doubting, or cheerfulness to a depressed, spirit. And to place a just remark, hazarded by the diffident, in the most advantageous point of view; to call the attention of the inattentive, the forward, and the self-sufficient, to the unobtrusive merit of some quiet person in the company, who, though of much worth, is perhaps of little note; these are requisites for conversation, less brilliant, but far more valuable, than the power of exciting bursts of laughter by the brightest wit, or of extorting admiration by the most poignant sallies of ridicule.

Wit is, of all the qualities of the female mind, that which requires the severest castigation; yet the temperate exercise of this fascinating quality throws an additional lustre round the character of an amiable woman; for to manage with discreet modesty a dangerous talent confers a higher praise than can be claimed by those from whom the absence of the talent removes the temptation to misemploy it. To women, wit is a peculiarly perilous possession, which nothing short of the sober-mindedness of Religion can keep in subjection; and, perhaps, there is scarcely any one order of human beings, that requires the powerful curb of Christian control, more than women whose genius has this tendency. Intemperate wit craves admiration as its natural aliment; it lives on flattery as its daily bread. The professed wit is a

hungry beggar, subsisting on the extorted alms of perpetual panegyric; and, like the vulture in the Grecian fable, the appetite increases by indulgence. Simple truth and sober approbation become tasteless and insipid to the palate daily vitiated by the delicious poignances of exaggerated commendation. Under the above restrictions, however, wit may be safely and pleasantly exercised; for *chastised wit* is an elegant, and well-bred, and not unfeminine quality. But *humour*, especially if it degenerate into imitation, or mimicry, is very sparingly to be ventured on; for it is so difficult totally to detach it from the suspicion of buffoonery, that a woman will be likely to lose more of that delicacy which is her appropriate grace, and without which every other quality loses its charm, than she will gain in another way in the eyes of the judicious, by the most successful display of humour.

A woman of genius, if she have true humility, will not despise those minor arts which she may not happen to possess, even though she be sometimes put to the trial of having her superior mental endowments overlooked, while she is held cheap for being destitute of some more ordinary accomplishment. Though the rebuke of Themistocles * was just to one who thought that so great a general and politician should employ his time like an effeminate lutanist, yet he would probably

* "Can you play on the lute?" said a certain Athenian to Themistocles. "No," replied he; "but I can make a little village a great city."

have made a different answer if he had happened to understand music.

If it be true that some women are too apt to affect brilliancy and display in their own discourse, and to undervalue the more humble pretensions of less showy characters, it must be confessed, also, that some of more ordinary abilities are now and then guilty of the opposite error, and foolishly affect to value themselves on not making use of the understanding they really possess, and affect to be thought even more silly than they are. They exhibit no small satisfaction in ridiculing women of high intellectual endowments, while they exclaim with much affected humility, and much real envy, that "they are thankful *they* are not geniuses." Now, though we are glad to hear gratitude expressed on any occasion, yet the want of sense is really no such great mercy to be thankful for; and it would indicate a better spirit, to pray to be enabled to make a right use of the moderate understanding they possess, than to expose with a too visible pleasure the imaginary or real defects of their more shining acquaintance. Women of the brightest faculties should not only "bear those faculties meekly," but should consider it as no derogation cheerfully to fulfil those humbler offices which make up the business and the duties of common life, while they should always take into the account the nobler exertions as well as the higher responsibility attached to higher gifts. In the mean time, women of lower attainments should exert to the utmost such abilities as Providence has assigned

them; and while they should not deride excellences which are above their reach, they should not despond at an inferiority which did not depend on themselves; nor because God has denied them ten talents, should they forget that they are equally responsible for the one he *has* allotted them, but set about devoting that one with humble diligence to the glory of the Giver.

Vanity, however, is not the monopoly of talents. Let not a young lady, therefore, fancy that she is humble merely because she is not ingenious, or consider the absence of talents as the criterion of worth. Humility is not the exclusive privilege of dulness. Folly is as conceited as wit, and ignorance many a time outstrips knowledge in the race of vanity. Equally earnest competitions spring from causes less worthy to excite them than wit and genius. Vanity insinuates itself into the female heart under a variety of unsuspected forms, and is on the watch to enter it by seizing on many a little pass which was not thought worth guarding.

Who has not seen as restless emotion agitate the features of an anxious matron, while peace and fame hung trembling in doubtful suspense on the success of a soup or a sauce, on which sentence was about to be pronounced by some consummate critic, as could have been excited by any competition for literary renown, by any struggle for contested wit? Anxiety for fame is by no means measured by the real value of the object pursued, but by the degree of estimation in which it is held by the pursuer. Nor was the illustrious

hero of Greece more effectually hindered from sleeping by the trophies of Miltiades, than many a modish damsel by the eclipsing superiority of some newer decoration exhibited by her more successful friend.

There is another species of vanity in some women which disguises itself under the thin veil of an affected humility: they will accuse themselves of some fault from which they are remarkably exempt, and lament the want of some talent which they are rather notorious for possessing. Now, though the wisest are commonly the most humble, and those who are freest from faults are most forward in confessing error, yet the practice we are censuring is not only a clumsy trap for praise, but there is a disingenuous intention, by renouncing a quality they eminently possess, to gain credit for others in which they are really deficient. All affectation involves a species of deceit. The Apostle, when he enjoins "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought," does not exhort us to think *falsely* of ourselves, but to think "soberly;" and it is worth observing, that in this injunction he does not use the word *speak*, but *think*, inferring, possibly, that it would be safer to *speak* little of ourselves or not at all; for it is so far from being an unequivocal proof of our humility to talk even of our defects, that while we make *self* the subject, in whatever way, self-love contrives to be gratified, and will even be content that our faults should be talked of, rather than that we should not be talked of at all. Some are also attacked with such proud

fits of humility, that while they are ready to accuse themselves of almost every sin in the lump, they yet take fire at the imputation of the slightest *individual* fault; and instantly enter upon their own vindication as warmly as if you, and not themselves, had brought forward the charge. The truth is, they ventured to condemn themselves, in the full confidence that you would contradict their self-accusation: the last thing they intended was that you should believe them; and they are never so much piqued and disappointed as when they are taken at their word.

Of the various shapes and undefined forms into which vanity branches out in conversation, there is no end. Out of a restless desire to please, grows the vain desire to astonish; for from vanity, as much as from credulity, arises that strong love of the marvellous, with which the conversation of the ill-educated abounds. Hence that fondness for dealing in narratives hardly within the compass of possibility. Here vanity has many shades of gratification; these shades will be stronger or weaker, whether the relater chance to have been an eye-witness of the wonder she recounts; or whether she claim only the second-hand renown of its having happened to her friend, or the still remoter celebrity of its having been witnessed only by her friend's friend: but even though that friend only knew the man, who remembered the woman who conversed with the person, who actually beheld the thing which is now causing admiration in the company, still *self*, though in a fainter degree, is

brought into notice, and the relater contrives, in some circuitous and distant way, to be connected with the wonder.

To correct this propensity "to elevate and surprise*," it would be well in mixed society to abstain altogether from hazarding stories, which, though they may not be absolutely false, yet lying without the verge of probability, are apt to impeach the credit of the narrator; in whom the very consciousness that she is not believed excites an increased eagerness to depart still farther from the soberness of truth, and induces a habit of vehement asseveration, which is too often called in to help out a questionable point. † Or if the propensity be irresistible, I would recommend to those persons who are much addicted to relate doubtful, or improbable, or wonderful circumstances, to imitate the example of the two great naturalists, Aristotle and Boyle, who not being willing to discredit their works with incredible relations, threw all their improbabilities into a lump, under the general name of *Strange Reports*. May we not suspect that, in some instances, the chapter of strange reports would be a bulky one?

* The Rehearsal.

† This is also a good rule in composition. An event though it may actually have happened, yet if it be out of the reach of probability, or contrary to the common course of nature, will seldom be chosen as a subject by a writer of good taste; for he knows that a probable fiction will interest the feelings more than an unlikely truth. Verisimilitude is, indeed, the poet's truth, but the truth of the moralist is of a more sturdy growth.

There is another shape, and a very deformed shape it is, in which loquacious vanity shows itself: I mean the betraying of confidence. Though the act be treacherous, yet the fault, in the first instance, is not treachery, but vanity. It does not so often spring from the mischievous desire of divulging a secret, as from the pride of having been trusted with it. It is the secret inclination of mixing *self* with whatever is important. The secret would be of little value, if the revealing it did not serve to intimate *our* connection with it; the pleasure of its having been deposited with us would be nothing, if others may not know that it has been so deposited. When we continue to see the variety of serious evils which this principle involves, shall we persist in asserting that vanity is a slender mischief?

There is one offence committed in conversation of much too serious a nature to be overlooked, or to be animadverted on without sorrow and indignation, — I mean the habitual and thoughtless profaneness of those who are repeatedly invoking their Maker's name on occasions the most trivial. It is offensive in all its variety of aspects; it is very pernicious in its *effects*; it is a *growing* evil: those who are most guilty of it, are from habit hardly conscious when they do it; are not aware of the sin; and for both these reasons, without the admonitions of faithful friendship, are little likely to discontinue it. It is utterly INEXCUSABLE: it has none of the palliatives of *temptation* which other vices plead, and in that respect stands

distinguished from all others, both in its nature and degree of guilt. Like many other sins, however, it is at once cause and effect: it *proceeds* from want of love and reverence to the best of Beings, and *causes* the want of that love both in themselves and others. Yet with all these aggravations, there is, perhaps, hardly any sin so frequently committed, so slightly censured, so seldom repented of, and so little guarded against. On the score of *impropriety*, too, it is additionally offensive, as being utterly repugnant to female delicacy, which often does not see the turpitude of this sin, while it affects to be shocked at swearing in a man. Now this species of profaneness is not only swearing, but, perhaps, in some respects, swearing of the worst sort; as it is a *direct* breach of an express command, and offends against the *very letter* of that law which says in so many words, THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN. It offends against politeness and *good breeding*; for those who commit it little think of the pain they are inflicting on the sober mind, which is deeply wounded when it hears the holy name it loves dishonoured; and it is as contrary to good breeding to give pain, as it is to true piety to be profane. It is astonishing that the refined and elegant should not reprobate this practice for its coarseness and vulgarity, as much as the pious abhor it for its sinfulness.

I would endeavour to give some faint idea of the grossness of this offence, by an analogy, (oh, how inadequate!) with which the feeling heart,

even though not seasoned with religion, may yet be touched. To such I would earnestly say, — Suppose you had some beloved friend, — to put the case still more strongly, a departed friend, — a revered parent, perhaps, — whose image never occurs without awakening in your bosom sentiments of tender love and lively gratitude; how would you feel if you heard this honoured name *bandied about* with unfeeling familiarity and indecent levity; or at best, thrust into every pause of speech as a vulgar expletive? Does not your affectionate heart recoil at the thought? And yet the hallowed name of your truest Benefactor, your heavenly Father, your best Friend, to whom you are indebted for all you enjoy; who gives you those very friends in whom you so much delight, those very talents with which you dishonour him, those very organs of speech with which you blaspheme him, is treated with an irreverence, a contempt, a wantonness, with which you cannot bear the very thought or mention of treating a human friend. His name is impiously, is unfeelingly, is ungratefully singled out as the object of decided irreverence, of systematic contempt, of thoughtless levity. His sacred name is used indiscriminately to express anger, joy, grief, surprise, impatience; and, what is almost still more unpardonable than all, it is wantonly used as a mere unmeaning expletive, which, being excited by no temptation, can have nothing to extenuate it; which, causing no emotion, can have nothing to recommend it, unless it be the pleasure of the sin.

Among the deep, but less obvious mischiefs of conversation, *misrepresentation* must not be overlooked. Self-love is continually at work, to give to all we say a bias in our own favour. The counteraction of this fault should be set about in the earliest stages of education. If young persons have not been discouraged in the too natural, but evil, propensity to relate every dispute which they have had with others to their own advantage; if they have not been trained to the bounden duty of doing justice even to those with whom they are at variance; if they have not been led to aim at a complete impartiality in their little narratives, if they have not been instructed never to take advantage of the absence of the other party, in order to make the story lean to their own side more than the truth will admit; how shall we in advanced life look for correct habits, for unprejudiced representations, for fidelity, accuracy, and unbiassed justice?

Yet, how often in society, otherwise respectable, are we pained with narrations in which prejudice warps, and self-love blinds! How often do we see, that withholding part of a truth answers the worst ends of a falsehood! How often regret the unfair turn given to a cause, by placing a sentiment in one point of view, which the speaker had used in another! the letter of truth preserved where its spirit is violated! a superstitious exactness scrupulously maintained in the underparts of a detail, in order to impress such an idea of integrity as shall gain credit for the *misrepresenter*, while he is designedly mis-stating the leading principle! How

may we observe a new character given to a fact by a different look, tone, or emphasis, which alters it as much as words could have done! the false impression of a sermon conveyed, when we do not like the preacher, or when through him we wish to make religion itself ridiculous! the care to avoid literal untruths, while the mischief is better effected by the unfair quotation of a passage divested of its context; the bringing together detached portions of a subject, and making those parts ludicrous, when connected, which were serious in their distinct position! the insidious use made of a sentiment by representing it as the *opinion* of him who had only brought it forward in order to expose it! the relating opinions which had merely been put hypothetically, as if they were the avowed principles of him we would discredit! that subtle falsehood which is so made to incorporate with a certain quantity of truth, that the most skilful moral chemist cannot analyse or separate them! for a good *misrepresenter* knows that a successful lie must have a certain infusion of truth, or it will not go down. And the nicety of this amalgamation is the test of his skill; as too *much* truth would defeat the end of his mischief, and too *little* would destroy the belief of the hearer. All that indefinable ambiguity and equivocation; all that prudent deceit, which is rather implied than expressed; those more delicate artifices of the school of Loyola and of Chesterfield, which allow us, when we dare not deny a truth, yet so to disguise and discolour it, that the truth we relate shall not resemble the

truth we heard! These and all the thousand shades of simulation and dissimulation will be carefully guarded against in the conversation of vigilant Christians.

Again, it is surprising to mark the common deviations from strict veracity which spring, not from enmity to truth, not from intentional deceit, not from malevolence or envy, not from the least design to injure; but from mere levity, habitual inattention, and a current notion that it is not worth while to be correct in small things. But here the doctrine of habits comes in with great force, and in that view no error is small. The cure of this disease in its more inveterate stages being next to impossible, its prevention ought to be one of the earliest objects of education. *

Some women indulge themselves in sharp raillery, unfeeling wit, and cutting sarcasms, from the consciousness, it is to be feared, that they are secure from the danger of being called to account; this license of speech being encouraged by the very circumstance which ought to suppress it — that they are women. To be severe, because they can be so with impunity, is a most ungenerous reason. It is taking a base and dishonourable advantage of their sex, the weakness of which, instead of tempting them to commit offences because they can commit them with safety, ought rather to make them more scrupulously careful to avoid indiscretions for which no reparation can be demanded. What can be said for those who carelessly involve

* See the Chapter on the Use of Definitions.

the injured party in consequences from which they know that themselves are exempted, and whose very sense of their own security leads them to be indifferent to the security of others?

The grievous fault of gross and obvious detraction which infects conversation has been so heavily and so justly condemned by divines and moralists, that the subject, copious as it is, is exhausted. But there is an error of an opposite complexion, which we have before noticed, and against which the peculiar temper of the times requires that young ladies of a better cast should be guarded. From the narrowness of their own sphere of observation, they are sometimes addicted to accuse of uncharitableness that distinguishing judgment which, resulting from a sound penetration and a zeal for truth, forbids persons of a very correct principle to be indiscriminately prodigal of commendation without enquiry, and without distinction. There is an affectation of candour, which is almost as mischievous as calumny itself; nay, if it be less injurious in its individual application, it is, perhaps, more alarming in its general principle, as it lays waste the strong fences which separate good from evil. They know, as a received notion (though they sometimes calumniate), that calumny is wrong; but they have not been told that flattery is wrong also; and youth, being apt to fancy that the direct contrary to wrong must necessarily be right, are apt to be driven into violent extremes. The dread of being only suspected of one fault, makes them actually guilty of the opposite; and to

avoid the charge of harshness or of envy, they plunge into insincerity and falsehood. In this they are actuated either by an unsound judgment which does not see what is right, or an unsound principle which prefers what is wrong. Some also commend to conceal envy; and others are compassionate to indulge superiority.

In this age of high-minded independence, when our youth are apt to set up for themselves, when every man is too much disposed to be his own legislator, without looking to the established law of the land as his standard; and to set up for his own divine, without looking to the revealed will of God as his rule — by a candour equally vicious with our vanity, we are also complaisantly led to *give* the latitude we *take*; and it is become too frequent a practice in our *tolerating* young ladies, when speaking of their more erring and misled acquaintance, to offer for them this flimsy vindication, "that what they do is right if it appear right to *them*:" — "if *they* see the thing in that light, and act up to it with sincerity, they cannot be materially wrong." But the standard of truth, justice, and religion, must neither be elevated nor depressed, in order to accommodate it to actual circumstances; it must never be lowered to palliate error, to justify folly, or to vindicate vice. Good-natured young people often speak favourably of unworthy, or extravagantly of common characters, from one of these motives; either their own views of excellence are low, or they speak respectfully of the undeserving, to purchase for themselves the

reputation of tenderness and generosity; or they lavish unsparing praise on almost all alike, in the usurious hope of buying back universal commendation in return; or in those captivating characters in which the simple and masculine language of truth is sacrificed to the jargon of affected softness; and in which smooth and pliant manners are substituted for intrinsic worth, the inexperienced are too apt to *suppose* virtues, and to *forgive* vices. But they should carefully guard against the error of making *manner* the criterion of merit, and of giving unlimited credit to strangers for possessing every perfection, only because they bring into company the engaging exterior of urbanity and alluring gentleness. They should also remember that it is an easy, but not an honest way of obtaining the praise of candour, to get into the soft and popular habit of saying of all their acquaintance, when speaking of them, *O they are so good!* True Christian candour conceals faults, but it does not invent virtues. It tenderly forbears to expose the evil which may belong to a character, but it dares not ascribe to it the good which does not exist. To correct this propensity to false judgment and insincerity, it would be well to bear in mind, that while every good action, come from what source it may, and every good quality, be it found in whomsoever it will, deserves its fair proportion of distinct and willing commendation; yet, no action, no character, is GOOD, in the true sense of the word, which is not RELIGIOUS.

In fine — to recapitulate what has been said,

with some additional hints: — Study to promote both intellectual and moral improvement in conversation; labour to bring into it a disposition to bear with others, and to be watchful over yourself; keep out of sight any prominent talent of your own, which, if indulged, might discourage or oppress the feeble-minded; and try to bring their modest virtues into notice. If you know any one present to possess any particular weakness or infirmity, never exercise your wit by maliciously inventing occasions which may lead her to expose or betray it; but give as favourable a turn as you can to the follies which appear, and kindly help her to keep the rest out of sight. Never gratify your own humour, by hazarding what you suspect may wound any present in their persons, connections, professions in life, or religious opinions; and do not forget to examine whether the laugh your wit may have raised be never bought at this expense. Give credit to those who, without your kindness, will obtain none; do not talk *at* any one whom you dare not talk *to*, unless from motives in which the golden rule will bear you out. Seek neither to shine nor to triumph; and if you seek to please, take care that it be in order to convert the influence you may gain by pleasing, to the good of others. Cultivate true politeness, for it grows out of true principle, and is consistent with the Gospel of Christ; but avoid those feigned attentions which are not stimulated by good will, and those stated professions of fondness which are not dictated by esteem. Remember that the pleasure of being

thought *amiable* by strangers may be too dearly purchased, if it be purchased at the expense of truth and simplicity: remember, that Simplicity is the first charm in manner, as Truth is in mind; and could Truth make herself visible, she would appear invested in Simplicity.

Remember, also, that true Christian good nature is the soul, of which politeness is only the garb. It is not that artificial quality which is taken up by many when they go into society, in order to charm those whom it is not their particular business to please; and is laid down when they return home to those to whom to appear amiable is a real duty. It is not that fascinating but deceitful softness, which, after having acted over a hundred scenes of the most lively sympathy and tender interest with every slight acquaintance; after having exhausted every phrase of feeling, for the trivial sicknesses, or petty sorrows of multitudes who are scarcely known, leaves it doubtful whether a grain of real feeling or genuine sympathy be reserved for the dearest connections: and which dismisses a woman to her immediate friends with little affection, and to her own family with little attachment.

True good nature, that which alone deserves the name, is not a holiday ornament, but an every-day habit. It does not consist in servile complaisance, or dishonest flattery, or affected sympathy, or unqualified assent, or unwarrantable compliance, or eternal smiles. Before it can be allowed to rank with the virtues, it must be wrought up from a humour into a principle, from an occasional dispo-

sition into a habit. It must be the result of an equal and well-governed mind, not the start of casual gaiety, the trick of designing vanity, or the whim of capricious fondness. It is compounded of kindness, forbearance, forgiveness, and self-denial; "it seeketh not its own," but is capable of making continual sacrifices of its own tastes, humours, and self-love; yet it knows that among the sacrifices it makes it must never include its integrity. Politeness on the one hand, and Insensibility on the other, assume its name, and wear its honours; but they assume the honours of a triumph, without the merit of a victory; for Politeness subdues nothing, and Insensibility has nothing to subdue. Good nature of the true cast, and under the foregoing regulations, is above all price in the common intercourse of domestic society; for an ordinary quality, which is constantly brought into action by the perpetually recurring, though minute, events of daily life, is of higher value than more brilliant qualities which are less frequently called into use: as small pieces of ordinary current coin are of more importance in the commerce of the world than the medals of the antiquary. And, indeed, Christianity has given that new turn to the character of all the virtues, that perhaps it is the best test of the excellence of many, that they have little brilliancy in them. The Christian religion has at once degraded some splendid qualities from the rank which they held, and elevated those which were obscure into distinction.

CHAP. XVI.

ON THE DANGER OF AN ILL-DIRECTED SENSIBILITY.

In considering the human mind with a view to its improvement, it is prudent to endeavour to discover the natural bent of the individual character; and having found it, to direct your force against that side on which the warp lies, that you may lessen by counteraction the defect which, by applying your aid in a contrary direction, you might be promoting. But the misfortune is, people who mean better than they judge, are apt to take up a set of general rules, good, perhaps, in themselves, and originally gleaned from experience and observation on the nature of human things, but not applicable in all cases. These rules they keep by them as nostrums of universal efficacy, which they therefore often bring out for use in cases to which they do not apply. For to make any remedy effectual, it is not enough to know the medicine, you must study the constitution also; if there be not a congruity between the two, you may be injuring one patient by the very means which are requisite to raise and restore another.

In forming the female character, it is of importance that those on whom the task devolves should possess so much penetration as accurately to discern the degree of sensibility, and so much judg-

ment as to accommodate the treatment to the individual character. By constantly stimulating and extolling feelings naturally quick, those feelings will be rendered too acute and irritable. On the other hand, a calm and equable temper will become obtuse by the total want of excitement: the former treatment converts the feelings into a source of error, agitation, and calamity; the latter starves their native energy, deadens the affections, and produces a cold, dull, selfish spirit: for the human mind is an instrument which will lose its sweetness if strained too high, and will be deprived of its tone and strength if not sufficiently raised.

It is cruel to chill the precious sensibility of an ingenuous soul, by treating with supercilious coldness and unfeeling ridicule every indication of a warm, tender, disinterested, and enthusiastic spirit, as if it exhibited symptoms of a deficiency in understanding or in prudence. How many are apt to intimate, with a smile of mingled pity and contempt, in considering such a character, that when she knows the world, that is, in other words, when she shall be grown cunning, selfish, and suspicious, she will be ashamed of her present glow of honest warmth, and of her lovely susceptibility of heart. May she never know the world, if the knowledge of it must be acquired at such an expense! But to sensible hearts, every indication of genuine feeling will be dear, for they well know that it is this temper which, by the guidance of the Divine Spirit, may make her one day become more enamoured of the beauty of holiness; which, with the

co-operation of principle, and under its direction, will render her the lively agent of Providence in diminishing the misery that is in the world; into which misery this temper will give her a quicker intuition than colder characters possess. It is this temper which, when it is touched and purified by a "live coal from the altar*," will give her a keener taste for the spirit of religion, and a quicker zeal in discharging its duties. But let it be remembered, likewise, that as there is no quality in the female character which more raises its tone, so there is none which will be so likely to endanger the peace, and to expose the virtue of the possessor; none which requires to have its luxuriances more carefully watched, and its wild shoots more closely lopped.

For young women of affections naturally warm, but not carefully disciplined, are in danger of incurring an unnatural irritability; and while their happiness falls a victim to the excess of uncontrolled feelings, they are liable at the same time to indulge a vanity, of all others the most preposterous, that of being vain of their very defect. They have heard sensibility highly commended, without having heard any thing of those bounds and fences which were intended to confine it, and without having been imbued with that principle which would have given it a beneficial direction. Conscious that they possess the quality itself in the extreme, and not aware that they want all that makes that quality safe and delightful, they plunge

* Isaiah, vi. 6.

headlong into those sins and miseries from which they conceitedly and ignorantly imagine, that not principle, but coldness, has preserved the more sober-minded and well-instructed of their sex.

As it would be foreign to the present design to expatiate on those criminal excesses which are some of the sad effects of ungoverned passion, it is only intended here to hazard a few remarks on those lighter consequences of it, which consist in the loss of comfort, without ruin of character, and occasion the privation of much of the happiness of life, without involving any very censurable degree of guilt or discredit. It may, however, be incidentally remarked, and let it be carefully remembered, that if no women have risen so high in the scale of moral excellence as those whose natural warmth has been conscientiously governed by its true guide, and directed to its true end; so none have furnished such deplorable instances of extreme depravity as those who, through the ignorance or the dereliction of principle, have been abandoned by the excess of this very temper to the violence of ungoverned passions and uncontrolled inclinations. Perhaps, if we were to enquire into the remote cause of some of the blackest crimes which stain the annals of mankind, proflicacy, murder, and especially suicide, we might trace them back to this original principle, an ungoverned Sensibility.

Notwithstanding all the fine theories in prose and verse to which this topic has given birth, it will be found that very exquisite sensibility con-

tributes so little to *happiness*, and may yet be made to contribute so much to *usefulness*, that it may, perhaps, be generally considered as bestowed for an exercise to the possessor's own virtue, and at the same time, as a keen instrument with which he may better work for the good of others.

Women of this cast of mind are less careful to avoid the charge of unbounded extremes, than to escape at all events the imputation of insensibility. They are little alarmed at the danger of *exceeding*, though terrified at the suspicion of *coming short*, of what they take to be the extreme point of feeling. They will even resolve to prove the warmth of their sensibility, though at the expense of their judgment, and sometimes also of their justice. Even when they earnestly desire to *be* and to *do* good, they are apt to employ the wrong instrument to accomplish the right end. They employ the passions to do the work of the judgment; forgetting, or not knowing, that the passions were not given us to be used in the search and discovery of truth, which is the office of a cooler and more discriminating faculty; but to animate us to warmer zeal in the pursuit and practice of truth, when the judgment shall have pointed out what *is* truth.

Through this natural warmth, which they have been justly told is so pleasing, but which, perhaps, they have not been told will be continually exposing them to peril and to suffering, their joys and sorrows are excessive. Of this extreme irritability, as was before remarked, the ill-educated learn to boast as if it were a decided indication of superior-

ity of soul, instead of labouring to restrain it as the excess of a temper which ceases to be amiable, when it is no longer under the control of the governing faculty. It is misfortune enough to be born more liable to suffer and to sin, from this conformation of mind; it is too much to nourish the evil by unrestrained indulgence; it is still worse to be proud of so misleading a quality.

Flippancy, impetuosity, resentment, and violence of spirit, grow out of this disposition, which will be rather promoted than corrected by the system of education on which we have been animadverting; in which system, emotions are too early and too much excited, and tastes and feelings are considered as too exclusively making up the whole of the female character; in which the judgment is little exercised, the reasoning powers are seldom brought into action, and self-knowledge and self-denial scarcely included.

The propensity of mind which we are considering, if unchecked, lays its possessors open to unjust prepossessions, and exposes them to all the danger of unfounded attachments. In early youth, not only love at first sight, but also friendship, of the same instantaneous growth, springs up from an ill-directed sensibility; and in after-life, women under the powerful influence of this temper, conscious that they have much to be borne with, are too readily inclined to select for their confidential connections flexible and flattering companions, who will indulge and perhaps admire their faults, rather than firm and honest friends, who will reprove and

would assist in curing them. We may adopt it as a general maxim, that an obliging, weak, yielding, complaisant friend, full of small attentions, with little religion, little judgment, and much natural acquiescence and civility, is a most dangerous, though generally a too much desired, confidant: she soothes the indolence, and gratifies the vanity, of her friend, by reconciling her to her faults, while she neither keeps the understanding nor the virtues of that friend in exercise; but withholds from her every useful truth, which by opening her eyes might give her pain. These obsequious qualities are the "soft green*" on which the soul loves to repose itself. But it is not a refreshing or a wholesome repose: we should not select, for the sake of present ease, a soothing flatterer, who will lull us into a pleasing oblivion of our failings, but a friend who, valuing our soul's health above our immediate comfort, will rouse us from torpid indulgence to animation, vigilance, and virtue.

An ill-directed sensibility also leads a woman to be injudicious and eccentric in her *charities*; she will be in danger of proportioning her bounty to the immediate effect which the distressed object produces on her senses; and will, therefore, be more liberal to a small distress presenting itself to her own eyes than to the more pressing wants and better claims of those miseries of which she only hears the relation. There is a sort of stage-effect which some people require for their charities; and such a character as we are considering will be apt

* Burke's Sublime and Beautiful.

also to desire, that the object of her compassion shall have something interesting and amiable in it, such as shall furnish pleasing images and lively pictures to her imagination, and engaging subjects for description; forgetting, that in her charities, as well as in every thing else, she is to be a "follower of Him who pleased not himself:" forgetting, that the most coarse and disgusting object may be as much the representative of Him, who said, "Inasmuch as ye do it to one of the least of these ye do it unto Me," as the most interesting. Nay, the more uninviting and repulsive cases may be better tests of the principle on which we relieve, than those which abound in pathos and interest, as we can have less suspicion of our motive in the latter case than in the former. But, while we ought to neglect neither of these supposed cases, yet the less our feelings are caught by pleasing circumstances, the less will be the danger of our indulging self-complacency, and the more likely shall we be to do what we do for the sake of Him who has taught us, that no deeds but what are performed on that principle "shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

But through the want of that governing principle which should direct her sensibility, a tender-hearted woman, whose hand, if she be actually surrounded with scenes and circumstances to call it into action, is

> Open as day to melting charity;

nevertheless may utterly fail in the great and com-

prehensive duty of Christian love; for she has feelings which are acted upon solely by local circumstances and present events. Only remove her into another scene, distant from the wants she has been relieving; place her in the lap of indulgence, so entrenched with ease and pleasure, so immersed in the softnesses of life, that distress no longer finds any access to her presence, but through the faint and dull medium of a distant representation; remove her from the sight and sound of that misery, which, when present, so tenderly affected her—she now forgets that misery exists; as she hears but little, and sees nothing, of want and sorrow, she is ready to fancy that the world is grown happier than it was: in the mean time, with a quiet conscience, and a thoughtless vanity, she has been lavishing on superfluities that money which she would cheerfully have given to a charitable case, had she not forgotten that any such were in existence, because *Pleasure* had blocked up the avenues through which misery used to find its way to her heart; and now, when again such a case forces itself into her presence, she laments with real sincerity that the money is gone which should have relieved it.

In the mean time, perhaps, other women of less natural sympathy, but whose sympathies are under better regulation, or who act from a principle which requires little stimulus, have, by an habitual course of self-denial, by a constant determination to refuse themselves unnecessary indulgences, and by guarding against that dissolving PLEASURE which

melts down the firmest virtue that allows itself to bask in its beams, have been quietly furnishing a regular provision for miseries, which their knowledge of the state of the world teaches them are every where to be found, and which their obedience to the will of God tells them it is their duty both to find out and to relieve; a general expectation of being liable to be called upon for acts of charity will lead the conscientiously charitable always to be prepared.

On such a mind as we have been describing *Novelty* also will operate with peculiar force, and in nothing more than in the article of charity. Old-established institutions, whose continued existence must depend on the continued bounty of that affluence to which they owed their origin, will be sometimes neglected, as presenting no variety to the imagination, as having by their uniformity ceased to be interesting; there is now a total failure of those springs of mere sensitive feeling which set the charity agoing, and those sudden emotions of tenderness, and gusts of pity, which once were felt, must now be excited by newer forms of distress. As age comes on, that charity which has been the effect of mere feeling grows cold and rigid; this hardness is also increased by the frequent disappointments charity has experienced in its too high expectations of the gratitude and subsequent merit of those whom it has relieved; and by withdrawing its bounty, because some of its objects have been undeserving, it gives clear proof that what it bestowed was for its own gratification;

and now finding that self-complacency at an end, it bestows no longer. Probably, too, the cause of so much disappointment may have been, that ill choice of the objects to which feeling, rather than a discriminating judgment, has led. The summer showers of mere sensibility soon dry up, while the living spring of Christian charity flows alike in all seasons.

The impatience, levity, and fickleness, of which women have been somewhat too generally accused, are, perhaps, in no small degree aggravated by the littleness and frivolousness of female pursuits. The sort of education they commonly receive teaches girls to set a great price on small things. Besides this, they do not always learn to keep a very correct scale of degrees for rating the value of the objects of their admiration and attachment; but, by a kind of unconscious idolatry, they rather make a merit of loving *supremely* things and persons which ought to be loved with moderation and in a subordinate degree the one to the other. Unfortunately, they consider moderation as so necessarily indicating a cold heart and narrow soul, and they look upon a state of indifference with so much horror, that either to love or hate with energy is supposed by them to proceed from a higher state of mind than is possessed by more steady and equable characters. Whereas it is, in fact, the criterion of a warm but well-directed sensibility, that while it is capable of loving with energy, it must be enabled, by the judgment which governs it, to suit and adjust its degree of interest to the nature and excellence of

the object about which it is interested; for unreasonable prepossession, disproportionate attachment, and capricious or precarious fondness, is not sensibility.

Excessive but unintentional *flattery* is another fault into which a strong sensibility is in danger of leading its possessor. A tender heart and a warm imagination conspire to throw a sort of radiance round the object of their love, till they are dazzled by a brightness of their own creating. The worldly and fashionable borrow the warm language of sensibility without having the really warm feeling; and young ladies get a habit of saying, and especially of writing, such over-obliging and flattering things to each other, that this mutual politeness, aided by the self-love so natural to us all, and by an unwillingness to search into our own hearts, keeps up the illusion, and we acquire a habit of taking our character from the good we *hear* of ourselves, which others assume, but do not very well know, rather than from the evil we *feel* in ourselves, and which we, therefore, ought to be too thoroughly acquainted with to take our opinion of ourselves from what we hear from others.

Ungoverned sensibility is apt to give a wrong direction to its anxieties; and its affection often falls short of the true end of friendship. If the object of its regard happens to be sick, what enquiries! what prescriptions! what an accumulation is made of cases in which the remedy its fondness suggests has been successful! What an unaffected tenderness for the perishing body! Yet is this

sensibility equally alive to the immortal interests of the sufferer? Is it not silent and at ease when it contemplates the dearest friend persisting in opinions essentially dangerous; in practices unquestionably wrong? Does it not view all this, not only without a generous ardour to point out the peril, and rescue the friend; but if that friend be supposed to be dying, does it not even make it the *criterion* of kindness to let her die undeceived as to her true state? What a want of real sensibility, to feel for the pain, but not for the danger, of those we love! Now see what sort of sensibility the Bible teaches: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and shall not suffer sin upon him." * But let that tenderness which shrinks from the idea of exposing what it loves to a momentary pang figure to itself the bare possibility, that the object of its own fond affection may not be the object of the Divine favour! Let it shrink from the bare conjecture, "that the familiar friend, with whom it has taken sweet counsel," is going down to the gates of death, unrepenting, unprepared, and yet unwarned!

But mere human sensibility goes a shorter way to work. Not being able to give its friend the pain of hearing her faults or of knowing her danger, it works itself up into the quieting delusion that no danger exists, at least not for the objects of its own affection; it gratifies itself by inventing a salvation so comprehensive as shall take in all itself loves

* Leviticus, xix. 17.

with all their faults; it creates to its own fond heart an ideal and exaggerated divine mercy, which shall pardon and receive all in whom this blind sensibility has an interest, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

In regard to its application to religious purposes, it is a test that sensibility has received its true direction when it is supremely turned to the love of God; for to possess an overflowing fondness for our fellow-creatures and fellow-sinners, and to be cold and insensible to the Essence of goodness and perfection, is an inconsistency to which the feeling heart is awfully liable. God has himself the first claim to the sensibility he bestowed. "He *first* loved us:" this is a *natural* cause of love. "He loved us while we were sinners:" this is a *supernatural* cause. He continues to love us, though we neglect his favours, and slight his mercies: this would wear out any earthly kindness. He forgives us, not petty neglects, not occasional slights, but grievous sins, repeated offences, broken vows, and unrequited love. What human friendship performs offices so calculated to touch the soul of sensibility?

Those young women in whom feeling is indulged to the exclusion of reason and examination are peculiarly liable to be the dupes of prejudice, rash decisions, and false judgment. The understanding having but little power over the will, their affections are not well poised, and their minds are kept in a state ready to be acted upon by the fluctuations of alternate impulses, by sudden and

varying impressions, by casual and contradictory circumstances, and by emotions excited by every accident. Instead of being guided by the broad views of general truth, instead of having one fixed principle, they are driven on by the impetuosity of the moment. And this impetuosity blinds the judgment as much as it misleads the conduct; so that for want of a habit of cool investigation and enquiry, they meet every event without any previously-formed opinion or settled rule of action: and as they do not accustom themselves to appreciate the real value of things, their attention is as likely to be led away by the under parts of a subject, as to seize on the leading feature. The same eagerness of mind, which hinders the operation of the discriminating faculty, leads also to the error of determining on the rectitude of an action by its success, and to that of making the event of an undertaking decide on its justice or its propriety. It also leads to that superficial and erroneous way of judging which fastens on exceptions, if they make in our own favour, as grounds of reasoning, while they lead us to overlook received and general rules, which tend to establish a doctrine contrary to our wishes.

Open-hearted, indiscreet girls often pick up a few strong notions, which are as false in themselves as they are popular among the class in question; such as "that warm friends must make warm enemies;" that "the generous love and hate with all their hearts;" that "a reformed rake makes the best husband;" that "there is no medium in

marriage, but that it is a state of exquisite happiness or exquisite misery;" with many other doctrines of equal currency and equal soundness. These they consider as axioms, and adopt as rules of life. From the two first of these oracular sayings, girls are in no small danger of becoming unjust through the very warmth of their hearts; for they will acquire a habit of making their estimate of the good or ill qualities of others merely in proportion to the greater or less degree of kindness which they themselves have received from them. Their estimation of general character is thus formed on insulated and partial grounds; on the accidental circumstance of personal predilection or personal pique. Kindness to themselves or their friends involves all possible excellence; neglect to either, all imaginable defects. Friendship and gratitude can and should go a great way; but as they cannot convert vice into virtue, so they ought never to convert truth into falsehood. And it may be the more necessary to be upon our guard in this instance, because the very idea of gratitude may mislead us, by converting injustice into the semblance of a virtue. Warm expressions should, therefore, be limited to the conveying a sense of our own individual obligations which are real, rather than employed to give an impression of general excellence in the person who has obliged us, which may be imaginary. A good man is still good, though it may not have fallen in his way to oblige or serve *us*, nay, though he may have neglected, or even unintentionlly hurt us; and sin is

still sin, though committed by the person in the world to whom we are the most obliged, and whom we best love.

There is danger, also, lest our excessive commendation of our friends, merely as such, may be derived from vanity as well as gratitude. While we only appear to be triumphing in the virtues of our friend, we may be guilty of self-complacency: the person so excellent is the person who distinguishes *us;* and we are too apt to insert into the general eulogium the distinction we ourselves have received from him who is himself so much distinguished by others.

With respect to that fatal and most indelicate, nay, gross maxim, that "a reformed rake makes the best husband," — an aphorism to which the principles and the happiness of so many young women have been sacrificed, — it goes upon the preposterous supposition, not only that effects do not follow causes, but that they oppose them; it goes on the supposition, that habitual vice creates rectitude of character, and that sin produces happiness; thus flatly contradicting what the moral government of God uniformly exhibits in the course of human events, and what Revelation so evidently and universally teaches.

For it should be observed, that in these cases the reformation is generally, if not always, supposed to be brought about by the all-conquering force of female charms. Let but a profligate young man have a point to carry by winning the affections of a vain and thoughtless girl; he will begin his

attack upon her heart by undermining her religious principles; thus artfully removing every impediment which might have obstructed her receiving the addresses of a man without character: and while he will lead her not to hear without ridicule the mention of that change of heart which Scripture teaches and experience proves, that the power of Divine grace can work on a vicious character; while he will teach her to sneer at a change which he would treat with contempt, because he denies the possibility of so strange and miraculous a conversion; yet he will not scruple to swear that the power of her beauty has worked a revolution in his own loose practices which is equally complete and instantaneous.

But supposing his reformation to be genuine, it would even then by no means involve the truth of her proposition, that past libertinism insures future felicity. Yet many a weak girl, confirmed in this palatable doctrine by examples she has frequently admired of those surprising reformations so conveniently effected in the last scene of most of our comedies, has not scrupled to risk her earthly and eternal happiness with a man, who is not ashamed to ascribe to the influence of her beauty that power of changing the heart which he impiously denies to Omnipotence itself.

As to the last of these practical aphorisms, that "there is no medium in marriage, but that it is a state of exquisite happiness or exquisite misery;" this, though not equally sinful, is equally delusive; for marriage is only one modification of human

life, and human life is not commonly in itself a state of exquisite extremes, but is, for the most part, that mixed and moderate state so naturally dreaded by those who set out with fancying this world a state of rapture, and so naturally expected by those who know it to be a state of probation and discipline. Marriage, therefore, is only one condition, and often the best condition, of that imperfect state of being which, though seldom very exquisite, is often very happy, and which may yield much comfort to those who do not look for constant transport. But, unfortunately, those who find themselves disappointed of the unceasing raptures they had anticipated in marriage, disdaining to sit down with so poor a provision as comfort, and scorning the acceptance of that moderate lot which Providence commonly bestows with a view to check despondency and to repress presumption, give themselves up to the other alternative, and, by abandoning their hearts to discontent, make to themselves that misery with which their fervid imaginations had filled the opposite scale.

The truth is, these young ladies are very apt to pick up their opinions less from the divines than the poets; and the poets, though it must be confessed that they are some of the best embellishers of life, are not *quite* the safest conductors through it. In travelling through a wilderness, though we avail ourselves of the harmony of singing-birds to render the grove delightful, yet we never think of following them as guides to conduct us through its labyrinths.

Those women in whom the natural defects of a warm temper have been strengthed by an education which fosters their faults, are very dexterous in availing themselves of a hint when it favours a ruling inclination, soothes vanity, indulges indolence, or gratifies their love of power. They have heard so often from their favourite sentimental authors, and their more flattering male friends, "that when Nature denied them strength, she gave them fascinating graces in compensation;" that "their strength consists in their weakness;" and that "they are endowed with arts of persuasion which supply the absence of force and the place of reason;" that they learn, in time, to pride themselves on that very weakness, and to become vain of their imperfections; till at length they begin to claim for their defects, not only pardon, but admiration. Hence they acquire a habit of cherishing a species of feeling which, if not checked, terminates in excessive selfishness; they learn to produce their inability to bear contradiction as a proof of their tenderness; and to indulge in that sort of irritability in all that relates to themselves, which inevitably leads to the utter exclusion of all interest in the sufferings of others. Instead of exercising their sensibility in the wholesome duty of relieving distress and visiting scenes of sorrow, that sensibility itself is pleaded as a reason for their not being able to endure sights of woe, and for shunning the distress it should be exerted in removing. That exquisite sense of feeling which God implanted in the heart as a stimulus to quicken

us in relieving the miseries of others is thus introverted, and learns to consider *self* not as the agent, but the object of compassion. Tenderness is made an excuse for being hard-hearted; and instead of drying the weeping eyes of others, this false delicacy reserves its selfish and ready tears for the more elegant and less expensive sorrows of the melting novel or the pathetic tragedy.

When feeling stimulates only to self-indulgence; when the more exquisite affections of sympathy and pity evaporate in sentiment, instead of flowing out in active charity, and affording assistance, protection, or consolation to every species of distress within its reach; it is an evidence that the feeling is of a spurious kind; and instead of being nourished as an amiable tenderness, it should be subdued as a fond and base self-love.

That idleness, to whose cruel inroads many women of fortune are unhappily exposed, from not having been trained to consider wholesome occupation, vigorous exertion, and systematic employment, as making part of the indispensable duties and pleasures of life, lays them open to a thousand evils of this kind, from which the useful and the busy are exempted; and, perhaps, it would not be easy to find a more pitiable object than a woman with a great deal of time and a great deal of money on her hands, who, never having been taught the conscientious use of either, squanders both at random, or rather moulders both away, without plan, without principle, and without pleasure: — all whose projects begin and

terminate in self; who considers the rest of the world only as they may be subservient to her gratification; and to whom it never occurred, that both her time and money were given for the gratification and good of others.

It is not much to the credit of the other sex, that they now and then lend themselves to the indulgence of this selfish spirit in their wives, and cherish by a kind of false fondness those faults which should be combated by good sense and a reasonable counteraction; slothfully preferring a little false peace, the purchase of precarious quiet, and the popular reputation of good nature, to the higher duty of forming the mind, fixing the principles, and strengthening the character of her with whom they are connected. Perhaps, too, a little vanity in the husband helps out his good nature: he secretly rewards himself for his sacrifice by the consciousness of his superiority: he feels a self-complacency in his patient condescension to her weakness, which tacitly flatters his own strength; and he is, as it were, paid for stooping, by the increased sense of his own tallness. Seeing also, perhaps, but little of other women, he is taught to believe that they are all pretty much alike, and that, as a man of sense, he must content himself with what he takes to be the common lot. Whereas, in truth, by his misplaced indulgence, he has rather *made* his own lot than *drawn* it; and thus, through an indolent despair in the husband of being able to effect any amendment by opposition, and through the want of that sound affection

which labours to improve and exalt the character of its object, it happens, that many a helpless, fretful, and dawdling wife acquires a more powerful ascendancy than the most discreet and amiable woman; and that the most absolute female tyranny is established by these sickly and capricious humours.

The poets, again, who, to do them justice, are always ready to lend a helping hand when any mischief is to be done, have contributed their full share towards confirming these feminine follies; they have strengthened, by adulatory maxims sung in seducing strains, those faults which their talents and their influence should have been employed in correcting. By fair and youthful females an argument, drawn from sound experience and real life, is commonly repelled by a stanza or a sonnet; and a couplet is considered as nearly of the same validity with a text. When ladies are complimented with being

Fine by defect and delicately weak!

is not a standard of feebleness held out to them, to which vanity will gladly resort, and to which softness and indolence can easily act up, or rather *act down*, if I may be allowed the expression?

When ladies are told by the same misleading, but to them high, authority, that "smiles and tears are the irresistible arms with which Nature has furnished the weak for conquering the strong," will they not eagerly fly to this cheap and ready artillery, instead of laboaring to furnish them-

selves with a reasonable mind, an equable temper, and a meek and quiet spirit?

Every animal is endowed by Providence with the peculiar powers adapted to its nature and its wants; while none, except the human, by grafting art on natural sagacity, injures or mars the gift. Spoilt women, who fancy there is something more *picquant* and alluring in the mutable graces of caprice than in the monotonous smoothness of an even temper; and who also having heard much, as was observed before, about their "amiable weakness," learn to look about them for the best succedaneum to strength, the supposed absence of which they sometimes endeavour to supply by artifice. By this engine the weakest woman frequently furnishes the converse to the famous reply of the French minister, who, when he was accused of governing the mind of that feeble queen, Mary de Medicis, by sorcery, replied, "that the only sorcery he had used was that influence which strong minds naturally have over weak ones."

But though it be fair so to study the tempers defects, and weaknesses of others, as to convert our knowledge of them to the promotion of their benefit and our own; and though it be making a lawful use of our penetration to avail ourselves of the faults of others for "their good to edification;" yet all deviations from the straight line of truth and simplicity; every plot insidiously to turn influence to unfair account; all contrivances to extort from a bribed complaisance what reason and justice would refuse to our wishes; these are

some of the operations of that lowest and most despicable engine, selfish cunning, by which *little minds sometimes govern great ones.*

And, unfortunately, women from their natural desire to please, and from their sometimes doubting by what means this grand end may be best effected, are in more danger of being led into dissimulation than men; for dissimulation is the result of weakness; it is the refuge of doubt and distrust, rather than of conscious strength, the dangers of which lie another way. Frankness, truth, and simplicity, therefore, as they are inexpressibly charming, so are they peculiarly commendable in women; and nobly evince, that while the possessors of them wish to please, (and why should they not wish it?) they disdain to have recourse to any thing but what is fair, and just, and honourable to effect it; that they scorn to attain the most desired end by any but the most lawful means. The beauty of simplicity is, indeed, so intimately felt, and generally acknowledged by all who have a true taste for personal, moral, or intellectual beauty, that women of the deepest dissimulation often find their account in assuming an exterior the most foreign to their character, and exhibiting the most engaging *naïveté.* It is curious to see how much *art* they put in practice in order to appear *natural;* and the deep *design* which is set at work to display *simplicity.* And, indeed, this feigned simplicity is the most mischievous, because the most engaging of all the Proteus forms which Artifice can put on. For the most free and bold

sentiments have been sometimes hazarded with fatal success under this unsuspected mask. And an innocent, quiet, indolent, artless manner, has been adopted as the most refined and successful accompaniment of sentiments, ideas, and designs, neither artless, quiet, nor innocent.

CHAP. XVII.

ON DISSIPATION, AND THE MODERN HABITS OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.

PERHAPS the interests of true friendship, elegant conversation, mental improvement, social pleasure, maternal duty, and conjugal comfort, never received such a blow as when Fashion issued out that arbitrary and universal decree, that *every body must be acquainted with every body;* together with that consequent, authoritative, but rather inconvenient, clause, that *every body must also go every where every night.* The implicit and devout obedience paid to this law is incompatible with the very being of friendship; for as the circle of acquaintance expands, and it will be continually expanding, the affections will be beaten out into such thin laminæ as to leave little solidity remaining. The heart, which is continually exhausting itself in professions, grows cold and hard. The feelings of kindness diminish in proportion as the expression of it becomes more diffuse and indiscriminate. The very traces of "simplicity and godly sincerity," in a delicate female, wear away imperceptibly by constant collision with the world at large. And, perhaps, no woman takes so little interest in the happiness of her real friends, as she whose affections are incessantly evaporating in

universal civilities; as she who is saying fond and flattering things at random to a circle of five hundred people every night.

The decline and fall of animated and instructive conversation has been in a good measure effected by this barbarous project of assembling *en masse*. An excellent prelate *, with whose friendship the author was long honoured, and who himself excelled in the art of conversation, used to remark, that a few years had brought about a great revolution in the manners of society; that it used to be the custom, previously to going into company, to think that something was to be communicated or received, taught or learnt; that the powers of the understanding were expected to be brought into exercise, and that it was, therefore, necessary, to quicken the mind by reading and thinking, for the share the individual might be expected to take in the general discourse; but that now, knowledge, and taste, and wit, and erudition, seemed to be scarcely considered as necessary materials to be brought into the pleasurable commerce of the world; because now there was little chance of turning them to much account; and, therefore, he who possessed them, and he who possessed them not, were nearly on a footing.

It is obvious, also, that multitudinous assemblies are so little favourable to that *cheerfulness* which it should seem to be their very end to promote, that if there were any chemical process by which the quantum of spirits, animal or intellectual, could be ascertained, the diminution would be found to

* The late Bishop Horne.

have been inconceivably great, since the transformation of man and woman from a social to a gregarious animal.

But if it be true, that friendship, society, and cheerfulness, have sustained so much injury by this change of manners, how much more pointedly does the remark apply to family happiness?

Notwithstanding the known fluctuation of manners, and the mutability of language, could it be foreseen, when the apostle Paul exhorted "married women to be keepers *at home*," that the time would arrive when that very phrase would be selected to designate one of the most decided acts of dissipation? Could it be foreseen, that when a fine lady should send out a notification that on such a night she shall be AT HOME, these two significant words (besides intimating the rarity of the thing) would present to the mind an image the most *undomestic* which language can convey? Could it be anticipated that the event of one lady's being *at home* could only be effected by the universal concurrence of all her acquaintance to be abroad? that so simple an act should require such complicated co-operation? And that the report that one person would be found in her own house should operate with such an electric force as to empty the houses of all her friends?

My country readers, who may require to have it explained that these two magnetic words *at home* now possess the powerful influence of drawing together every thing *fine* within the sphere of their attraction, may need also to be apprised that the

guests afterwards are not asked what was *said* by the company, but whether the *crowd* was prodigious; the rule for deciding on the merit of a fashionable society not being by the taste or the spirit, but by the *score* and the *hundred.* The question of pleasure, like a parliamentary question, is now carried by numbers. And when two parties modish, like two parties political, are run one against another on the same night, the same kind of mortification attends the leader of a defeated minority, the same triumph attends the exulting carrier of superior numbers, in the one case as in the other. The scale of enjoyment is rated by the measure of fatigue, and the quantity of inconvenience furnishes the standard of gratification: the smallness of the dimensions to which each person is limited, on account of the multitudes which must divide among them a certain given space, adds to the sum-total of general delight; the aggregate of pleasure is produced by the proportion of individual suffering; and not till every guest feels herself in the state of a cat in an exhausted receiver, does the delighted hostess attain the consummation of that renown which is derived from such overflowing rooms, as shall throw all her competitors at a disgraceful distance.

An eminent divine has said, that either "perseverance in prayer will make a man leave off sinning, or a continuance in sin will make him leave off prayer." This remark may be accommodated to those ladies who, while they are devoted to the enjoyments of the world, yet retain considerable

solicitude for the instruction of their daughters. But if they are really in earnest to give them a Christian education, they must themselves renounce a dissipated life; or if they resolve to pursue the the chase of pleasure, they must renounce this prime duty. Contraries cannot unite. The moral nurture of a tall daughter can no more be administered by a mother whose time is absorbed by crowds abroad, than the physical nurture of her infant offspring can be supplied by her in a perpetual absence from home; and is not that a preposterous affection, which, after leading a mother to devote a few months to the inferior duty of furnishing aliment to the mere animal life, allows her to desert her post when the more important moral and intellectual cravings require sustenance? This great object is not to be effected with the shreds and parings rounded off from the circle of a dissipated life; but in order to its adequate execution, the mother should carry it on with the same spirit and perseverance at home, which the father thinks it necessary to be exerting abroad, in his public duty or professional engagements.

The usual vindication (and in theory it has a plausible sound) which has been offered for the large portion of time spent by women in acquiring ornamental talents is, that they are calculated to make the possessor love home, and that they innocently fill up the hours of leisure. The plea has, indeed, so promising an appearance, that it is worth enquiring whether it be in fact true. Do we, then, on fairly pursuing the enquiry, discover

that those who have spent most time in such light acquisitions are really remarkable for loving home or staying quietly there? or that when there, they are sedulous in turning time to the best account? I speak not of that rational and respectable class of women, who, applying, as many of them do, these elegant talents to their true purpose, employ them to fill up the vacancies of better occupations, and to embellish the leisure of a life actively good. But do we *generally* see that even the most valuable and sober part of the reigning female acquisitions leads their possessor to scenes most favourable to the enjoyment of them? to scenes which we should naturally suppose she would seek, in order to the more effectual cultivation of such rational pleasures? To learn to endure, to enjoy, and to adorn solitude, seems to be one great end for bestowing accomplishments, instead of making them the motive for hurrying those who have acquired them into crowds, in order for their most effectual display.

Would not those delightful pursuits, botany and drawing, for instance, seem likely to court the fields, the woods, and gardens of the paternal seat, as more congenial to their nature, and more appropriate to their exercise, than barren watering-places, destitute of a tree, or an herb, or a flower, and not affording an hour's interval from successive pleasures, to profit by the scene even if it abounded with the whole vegetable world, from the "Cedar of Lebanon to the Hyssop on the wall."

From the mention of watering-places, may the author be allowed to suggest a few remarks on the evils which have arisen from the general conspiracy of the gay to usurp the regions of the sick; and from their converting the health-restoring fountains, meant as a refuge for disease, into the resorts of vanity for those who have no disease but idleness?

This inability of staying at home, as it is one of the most infallible, so it is one of the most dangerous, symptoms of the reigning mania. It would be more tolerable, did this epidemic malady only break out, as formerly, during the winter, or some one season. Heretofore, the tenantry and the poor, the natural dependants on the rural mansions of the opulent, had some definite period to which they might joyfully look forward for the approach of those patrons, part of whose business in life it is to influence by their presence, to instruct by their example, to soothe by their kindness, and to assist by their liberality, those whom Providence, in the distribution of human lots, has placed under their more immediate protection. Though it would be far from truth to assert, that dissipated people are never charitable, yet I will venture to say, that dissipation is inconsistent with the *spirit* of charity. That affecting precept, followed by so gracious a promise, "Never turn away thy face from any poor man, and then the face of the Lord shall never be turned away from thee," cannot literally mean that we should *give* to all, as then we should soon have nothing left to give: but it seems to intimate the habitual attention, the duty

of enquiring out all cases of distress, in order to judge which are fit to be relieved; now for this enquiry, for this attention, for this sympathy, the dissipated have little taste, and less leisure.

Let a reasonable conjecture, for calculation would fail, be made of how large a diminution of the general good has been effected, in this single respect, by causes which, though they do not seem important in themselves, yet make no inconsiderable part of the mischief arising from modern manners; and I speak now to persons who *intend* to be charitable; what a deduction will be made from the aggregate of charity, by a circumstance apparently trifling, when we consider what would be the beneficial effects of that regular bounty, which must almost unavoidably result from the evening walks of a great and benevolent family, among the cottages of their own domain: the thousand little acts of, comparatively, unexpensive kindness which the *sight* of petty wants and difficulties would excite; wants, which will scarcely be felt in the relation, and which will probably be neither seen, nor felt, nor fairly represented, in their long absences, by an agent. And what is even almost more than the good done, is the habit of mind kept up in those who do it. Would not this habit, exercised on the Christian principle, that "even a cup of cold water," given upon *right motives*, shall not lose its reward; while the giving "all their goods to feed the poor," without the true *principle* of charity, shall profit them nothing; would not this habit, I say, and the incul-

cation of the spirit which produces it, be almost the best part of the education of daughters?*

Transplant this wealthy and bountiful family periodically to the frivolous and uninteresting bustle of the watering-place; *there* it is not denied that frequent public and fashionable acts of charity may make a part, and it is well they do, of the business and amusement of the day; with this latter, indeed, they are sometimes good-naturedly mixed up. But how shall we compare the regular systematical good these persons would be doing at their own home, with the light, and amusing, and bustling bounties of the public place? The illegal raffle at the toy-shop may relieve, it is true, some distress; but this distress, though it may be real, and if real it ought to be relieved, is far less easily ascertained than the wants of the poor round a person's own neighbourhood, or the debts of a distressed tenant. How shall we compare the

* It would be a pleasant summer amusement for our young ladies of fortune, if they were to preside at such spinning feasts as are instituted at Nuneham for the promotion of virtue and industry in their own sex. Pleasurable anniversaries of this kind would serve to combine in the mind of the poor two ideas which ought never to be separated, but which *they* are not very forward to unite, — that the great wish is to make them *happy* as well as good. Occasional approximations of the rich and poor, for the purposes of relief and instruction, and annual meetings for the purpose of innocent pleasure, would do much towards wearing away discontent; and the conviction that the rich really take an interest in their comfort would contribute to reconcile the lower class to that state in which it has pleased God to place them.

broad stream of bounty which should be flowing through, and refreshing whole districts, with the penurious current of the subscription breakfast for the needy musician, in which the price of the gift is taken out in the diversion, and in which pleasure dignifies itself with the name of bounty? How shall we compare the attention, and time, and zeal, which would otherwise, perhaps, be devoted to the village-school, spent in hawking about benefit tickets for a broken actor, while the kindness of the benefactress, perhaps, is rewarded by scenes in which her charity is not always repaid by the purity of the exhibition?

Far be it from the author to wish to check the full tide of charity wherever it is disposed to flow! Would she could multiply the already abundant streams, and behold every multiplied source purified! But in the public resorts there are many who are able and willing to give. In the sequestered, though populous, village there is, perhaps, only one affluent family: the distress which they do not *behold* will probably not be attended to: the distress which *they* do not relieve will probably not be relieved at all: the wrongs which *they* do not redress will go unredressed: the oppressed whom *they* do not rescue will sink under the tyranny of the oppressor. Through their own rural domains, too, charity runs in a clearer current, and is under less suspicion of being polluted by that muddy tincture which it is sometimes apt to contract in passing through the impure soil of the world.

But to return from this too long digression. The old standing objection formerly brought forward by the prejudices of the other sex, and too eagerly laid hold on as a shelter for indolence and ignorance by ours, was, that intellectual accomplishments too much absorbed the thoughts and affections, took women off from the necessary attention to domestic duties, and superinduced a contempt or neglect of whatever was useful. It is peculiarly the character of the present day to detect absurd opinions, and to expose plausible theories by the simple and decisive answer of experiment; and it is presumed that this popular error, as well as others, is daily receiving the refutation of actual experience. For it cannot surely be maintained on ground that is any longer tenable, that acquirements truly rational are calculated to draw off the mind from real duties. Whatever removes prejudices, whatever stimulates industry, whatever rectifies the judgment, whatever corrects self-conceit, whatever purifies the taste, whatever raises the understanding, will be likely to contribute to moral excellence. To woman, moral excellence is the grand object of education; and of moral excellence, domestic life is to woman the proper sphere.

Count over the list of females who have made shipwreck of their fame and virtue, and have furnished the most lamentable examples of the dereliction of family duties, and the number will not be found considerable who have been led astray by the pursuit of knowledge. And if a few

deplorable instances of this kind be produced, it will commonly be found that there was little infusion in the minds of such women of that correcting principle, without which all other knowledge only "puffeth up."

The time nightly expended in late female vigils is expended by the light of far other lamps than those which are fed by the student's oil; and if families *are* to be found who are neglected through too much study in the mistress, it will probably be proved to be Hoyle, and not Homer, who has robbed her children of her time and affections. For one family which has been neglected by the mother's passion for books, an hundred have been deserted through her passion for play. The husband of a fashionable woman will not often find that the library is the apartment the expenses of which involve him in debt or disgrace. And for one literary slattern, who now manifests her indifference to her husband by the neglect of her person, there are scores of elegant spendthrifts who ruin theirs by excess of decoration.

May I digress a little while I remark, that I am far from asserting that literature has never filled women with vanity and self-conceit: the contrary is too obvious; and it happens in this as in other cases, that a few characters conspicuously absurd have served to bring a whole order into ridicule. But I will assert, that, in general, those whom books are supposed to have spoiled would have been spoiled in another way without them. She who is a vain pedant because she has read much,

has probably that defect in her mind which would have made her a vain fool if she had read nothing. It is not her having more knowledge, but less sense, which makes her insufferable; and ignorance would have added little to her value, for it is not what she has, but what she wants, which makes her unpleasant. The truth, however, probably lies here, that while her understanding was improved, the tempers of her heart were neglected, and that in cultivating the fame of a *savante*, she lost the humility of a Christian. But these instances also furnish only a fresh argument for the *general* cultivation of the female mind. The wider diffusion of sound knowledge would remove that temptation to be vain, which may be excited by its rarity.

From the union of an unfurnished mind and a cold heart, there results a kind of necessity for *dissipation*. The very term gives an idea of mental imbecility. That which a working and fatigued mind requires is *relaxation:* it requires something to unbend itself, to slacken its efforts, to relieve it from its exertions; while amusement is the *business* of feeble minds, and is carried on with a length and seriousness incompatible with the refreshing idea of relaxation. There is scarcely any one thing which comes under the description of public amusement, which does not fill the space of three or four hours nightly. Is not that a large proportion of refreshment for a mind, which, generally speaking, has hardly been kept so many hours together on the stretch in the morning, by business, by study, by devotion?

But while we would assert that a woman of a cultivated intellect is not driven by the same necessity as others into the giddy whirl of public resort, who but regrets that real cultivation does not *inevitably* preserve her from it? No wonder that inanity of character, that vacuity of mind, that torpid ignorance, should plunge into dissipation as their natural refuge; should seek to bury their insignificance in the crowd of pressing multitudes, and hope to escape analysis and detection in the undistinguished masses of mixed assemblies! *There* attrition rubs all bodies smooth, and makes all surfaces alike: thither superficial and external accomplishments naturally fly as to their proper scene of action; as to a field where competition in *such* perfections is in perpetual exercise; where the laurels of admiration are to be won; whence the trophies of vanity may be carried off triumphantly.

It would, indeed, be matter of little comparative regret, if this corrupt air were breathed only by those whose natural element its seems to be; but who can forbear lamenting that the power of fashion attracts into this impure and unwholesome atmosphere minds also of a better make, of higher aims and ends, of more ethereal temper? that it attracts even those who, renouncing enjoyments for which they have a genuine taste, and which would make them really happy, neglect the society which they love and the pursuits which they admire, in order that they may *seem* happy and *be* fashionable in the chase of pleasures which they despise, and

in company they disapprove! But no correctness of taste, no depth of knowledge, will infallibly preserve a woman from this contagion, unless her heart be impressed with a deep Christian conviction that she is accountable for the application of knowledge as well as for the dedication of time. Perhaps if there be any one principle which should more sedulously than another be worked into the youthful mind, it is the doctrine of particular as well as of general responsibility.

The contagion of dissipated manners is so deep, so wide, so fatal, that, if I were called upon to assign the predominant cause of the larger portion of the misfortunes and corruptions of the great and gay in our days, I should not look for it principally in any obviously important or striking circumstance; not in the practice of notorious vices, not originally in the dereliction of Christian principle; but I should, without hesitation, ascribe it to a growing, regular, systematic series of amusements; to an incessant, boundless, and not very disreputable DISSIPATION. Other corruptions, though more formidable in appearance, are yet less fatal in some respects, because they leave us intervals to reflect on their turpitude, and spirit to lament their excesses; but dissipation is the more hopeless, as, by engrossing almost the entire life, and enervating the whole moral and intellectual system, it leaves neither time for reflection nor space for self-examination, nor temper for the cherishing of right affections, nor leisure for the operation of sound principles, nor interval for regret, nor vigour to

resist temptation, nor energy to struggle for amendment.

The great master of the science of pleasure among the ancients, who reduced it into a system, which he called *the chief good of man*, directed that there should be interval enough between the succession of delights, to sharpen inclination; and, accordingly, instituted periodical days of abstinence, well knowing that gratification was best promoted by previous self-denial. But so little do our votaries of fashion understand the true nature of pleasure, that one amusement is allowed to overtake another, without any interval either for recollection of the past or preparation for the future. Even on their own selfish principle, therefore, nothing can be worse understood than this continuity of enjoyment; for to such a degree of labour is the pursuit carried, that the pleasures exhaust instead of exhilarating, and the recreations are such as require to be rested from.

For, not to argue the question on the ground of religion, but merely on that of present enjoyment, look abroad and see who are the people that complain of weariness, listlessness, and dejection. You will not find them among the class of such as are overdone with labour, but with pleasure. The natural and healthful fatigues of business may be recruited by simple and cheap gratifications; but a spirit worn down with the toils of amusement requires pleasures of poignancy, — varied multiplied, stimulating!

It has been observed by medical writers, that

that sober excess in which many indulge, by eating and drinking a little too much at every day's dinner and every night's supper, more effectually undermines the health than those more rare excesses by which others now and then break in upon a life of general sobriety. This illustration is not introduced with a design to recommend occasional deviations into gross vice, by way of a pious receipt for mending the morals, but merely to suggest that there is a probability that those who are sometimes driven by unresisted passion into irregularities which shock their cooler reason, are more liable to be roused to a sense of their danger than persons whose perceptions of evil are blunted through a round of systematical, unceasing, and yet not scandalous dissipation. And when I affirm that this system of regular indulgence relaxes the soul, enslaves the heart, bewitches the senses, and thus disqualifies for pious thought or useful action, without having any thing in it so gross as to shock the conscience; and when I hazard an opinion that this state is more formidable, because less alarming, than that which bears upon it a more determined character of evil, I no more mean to speak of the latter in slight and palliating terms, than I would intimate, that because the sick sometimes recover from a fever, but seldom from a palsy, that a fever is therefore a safe or a healthy state.

But there seems to be an error in the first concoction, out of which the subsequent errors successively grow. First, then, as has been observed before, the showy education of women tends

chiefly to qualify them for the glare of public assemblies; secondly, they seem in many instances to be so educated, with a view to the greater probability of their being splendidly married; thirdly, it is alleged, in vindication of those dissipated practices, that daughters can only be seen, and admirers procured, at balls, operas, and assemblies; and that, therefore, by a natural and necessary consequence, balls, operas, and assemblies must be followed up, without intermission, till the object be effected. For the accomplishment of this object it is that all this complicated machinery had been previously set agoing, and kept in motion with an activity not at all slackened by the disordered state of the system; for some machines, instead of being stopped, go faster because the main spring is out of order; the only difference being that they go wrong, and so the increased rapidity adds only to the quantity of error.

It is also, as we have already remarked, an error to fancy that the love of pleasure exhausts itself by indulgence, and that the very young are chiefly addicted to it. The contrary appears to be true. The desire often grows with the pursuit in the same degree as motion is quickened by the continuance of the gravitating force.

First, then, it cannot be thought unfair to trace back the excessive fondness for amusement to that mode of education which we have elsewhere reprobated. Few of the accomplishments, falsely so called, assist the developement of the faculties; they do not exercise the judgment, nor bring into

action those powers which fit the heart and mind for the occupations of life; they do not prepare women to love home, to understand its employments, to enliven its uniformity, to fulfil its duties, to multiply its comforts; they do not lead to that sort of experimental logic, if I may so speak, compounded of observation and reflection, which makes up the moral science of life and manners. Talents which have *display* for their object despise the narrow stage of home; they demand mankind for their spectators, and the world for their theatre.

While we cannot help shrinking a little from the idea of a delicate young creature, lovely in person, and engaging in mind and manners, sacrificing nightly at the public shrine of Fashion, at once the votary and the victim; we cannot help figuring to ourselves how much more interesting she would appear in the eyes of a man of sense and feeling, did he behold her in the more endearing situations of domestic life. And who can forbear wishing that the good sense, good taste, and delicacy of the men had rather led them to prefer seeking companions for life in the almost sacred quiet of a virtuous home? *There* they might have had the means of seeing and admiring those amiable beings in the best point of view: *there* they might have been enabled to form a juster estimate of female worth than is likely to be obtained in scenes where such qualities and talents as might be expected to add to the stock of domestic comfort must necessarily be kept in the back ground, and where such only *can* be brought into view as are

not particularly calculated to insure the certainty of home delights.

> O! did they keep their persons fresh and new,
> How would they pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
> And win by rareness!

But by what unaccountable infatuation is it that men, too, even men of understanding, join in the confederacy against their own happiness, by looking for their home companions in the resorts of vanity? Why do not such men rise superior to the illusions of Fashion? Why do they not uniformly seek her who is to preside in *their* families in the bosom of her own? in the practice of every domestic duty, in the exercise of every amiable virtue, in the exertion of every elegant accomplishment? those accomplishments of which we have been reprobating not the possession, but the application? *There* they would find her exerting them to their true end, to enliven business, to animate retirement, to embellish the charming scene of family delights, to heighten the interesting pleasures of social intercourse, and, rising in just gradation to their noblest object, to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour.

If, indeed, woman were mere outside, form and face only, and if *mind* made up no part of her composition, it would follow that a ball-room was quite as appropriate a place for choosing a wife as an exhibition-room for choosing a picture. But, inasmuch as women are not mere portraits, their value not being determinable by a glance of the

eye, it follows that a different mode of appreciating their value, and a different place for viewing them, antecedent to their being individually selected, is desirable. The two cases differ also in this, that if a man select a picture for himself from among all its exhibited competitors, and bring it to his own house, the picture being passive, he is able to *fix* it there: while the wife, picked up at a public place, and accustomed to incessant display, will not, it is probable, when brought home, stick so quietly to the spot where he fixes her; but will escape to the exhibition-room again, and continue to be displayed at every subsequent exhibition, just as if she were not become private property, and had never been definitively disposed of.

It is the novelty of a thing which astonishes us, and not its absurdity: objects may be so long kept before the eye that it begins no longer to observe them; or may be brought into such close contact with it that it does not discern them. Long habit so reconciles us to almost any thing, that the grossest improprieties cease to strike us when they once make a part of the common course of action. This, by the way, is a strong reason for carefully sifting every opinion and every practice before we let them incorporate into the mass of our habits, for after that time they will be no more examined. Would it not be accounted preposterous for a young man to say that he had fancied such a lady would dance a better minuet because he had seen her behave devoutly at church, and *therefore* had chosen her for his partner? and

yet he is not thought at all absurd when he intimates that he chose a partner for life because he was pleased with her at a ball. Surely the place of choosing and the motive of choice would be just as appropriate in one case as in the other, and the mistake, if the judgment failed, not *quite* so serious.

There is, among the more elevated classes of society, a certain set of persons who are pleased exclusively to call themselves, and whom others by a sort of compelled courtesy are pleased to call, *the fine world.* This small detachment consider their situation with respect to the rest of mankind just as the ancient Grecians did theirs; that is, as the Grecians thought there were but two sorts of beings, and that all who were not Greeks were barbarians, so this *certain set* conceives of society as resolving itself into two distinct classes, the *fine world* and the *people*; to which last class they turn over all who do not belong to their little *coterie*, however high their rank, or fortune, or merit. Celebrity, in their estimation, is not bestowed by birth or talents, but by the circumstance of being connected with *them.* They have laws, immunities, privileges, and almost a language of their own: they form a kind of distinct *cast*, and with a sort of *esprit du corps* detach themselves from others, even in general society, by an affectation of distance and coldness; and only whisper and smile in their own little groups of the initiated: their confines are jealously guarded, and their privileges are incommunicable.

In this society a young man loses his natural cha-

racter, which, whatever it might have been originally, is melted down and cast into the one prevailing mould of Fashion; all the strong, native discriminating qualities of his mind being made to take one shape, one stamp, one superscription! However varied and distinct might have been the materials which nature threw into the crucible, plastic Fashion takes care that they shall all be the same, or at least appear the same, when they come out of the mould. A young man in such an artificial state of society, accustomed to the voluptuous ease, refined luxuries, soft accomodations, obsequious attendance, and all the unrestrained indulgences of a fashionable CLUB, is not to be expected after marriage to take very cordially to a home unless very extraordinary exertions are made to amuse, to attach, and to interest him; and *he* is not likely to lend a very helping hand to the happiness of the union, whose most laborious exertions have hitherto been little more than a selfish stratagem to reconcile health with pleasure. Excess of gratification has only served to make him irritable and exacting; it will of course be no part of his project to *make* sacrifices, he will expect to *receive* them; and what would appear incredible to the *Paladins* of gallant times, and the *Chevaliers Preux* of more heroic days, even in the necessary business of establishing himself for life, he sometimes is more disposed to expect attentions than to make advances.

Thus the indolent son of Fashion with a thousand fine, but dormant, qualities, which a bad tone

of manners forbids him to bring into exercise; with real energies which that tone does not allow him to discover, and an unreal apathy which it commands him to feign; with the heart of a hero, perhaps, if called into the field, affects at home the manners of a Sybarite; and he who, with a Roman, or, what is more, with a British valour, would leap into the gulf at the call of public duty,

> Yet in the soft and piping time of peace,

when Fashion has resumed her rights, would murmur if a rose-leaf lay double under him.

The clubs above alluded to, as has been said, generate and cherish luxurious habits, from their perfect ease, undress, liberty, and inattention to the distinctions of rank; they promote a love of play, and, in short, every temper and spirit which tends to *undomesticate*; and what adds to the mischief is, that all this voluptuous enjoyment is attained at a cheap rate compared with what may be procured at home in the same style.

These indulgences, and this habit of mind, gratify so many passions, that a woman can never hope successfully to counteract the evil by supplying at home gratifications which are *of the same kind*, or which gratify the *same* habits. Now a passion for gratifying vanity, and a spirit of dissipation *is* a passion of the same kind; and, therefore, though for a few weeks, a man who has chosen his wife in the public haunts, and this wife a woman made up of *accomplishments*, may, from the novelty of

the connection and of the scene, continue domestic; yet in a little time she will find that those passions, to which she has trusted for making pleasant the married life of her husband, will crave the still more seducing pleasures of the club; and while these are pursued, she will be consigned over to solitary evenings at home, or driven back to the old dissipations abroad.

To conquer the passion for club gratifications, a woman must not strive to feed it with sufficient aliment of the same kind in her society, either at home or abroad; she must supplant and overcome it by a passion of a different nature, which Providence has kindly planted within us; I mean, by inspiring him with the love of fire-side enjoyments. But to qualify herself for administering these, she must cultivate her understanding, and her heart, and her temper, acquiring at the same time that modicum of accomplishments suited to his taste, which may qualify her for possessing, both for him and for herself, greater varieties of safe recreation.

One great cause of the want of attachment in these modish couples is, that by living in the world at large, they are not driven to depend on each other as the chief source of comfort. Now it is pretty clear, in spite of modern theories, that the very frame and being of societies, whether great or small, public or private, is jointed and glued together by dependence. Those attachments, which arise from, and are compacted by, a sense of mutual wants, mutual affection, mutual benefit, and

mutual obligation, are the cement which secures the union of the family as well as of the state.

Unfortunately, when two young persons of the above description marry, the union is sometimes considered rather as the end than the beginning of an engagement: the attachment of each to the other is rather viewed as an object already completed, than as one which marriage is to confirm more closely. But, indeed, the companion for life is not always chosen from the purest motive; she is selected, perhaps, because she is admired by other men, rather than because she possesses in an eminent degree those peculiar qualities which are likely to constitute the individual happiness of the man who chooses her. Vanity usurps the place of affection, —and indolence swallows up the judgment. Not happiness, but some easy substitute for happiness, is pursued; and a choice which may excite envy, rather than produce satisfaction, is adopted as the means of effecting it.

The pair, not *matched but joined*, set out separately with their independent and individual pursuits. Whether it made a part of their original plan or not, that they should be indispensably necessary to each other's comfort, the sense of this necessity, probably not very strong at first, rather diminishes than increases by time; they live so much in the world, and so little together, that to stand well with their *own set* continues the favourite project of each; while to stand well with each other is considered as an under part of the plot in the drama of life. Whereas, did they start in the

conjugal race with the fixed idea that they were to look to each other for their chief worldly happiness, not only principle, but prudence, and even selfishness, would convince them of the necessity of sedulously cultivating each other's esteem and affection as the grand means of promoting that happiness. But vanity, and the desire of flattery and applause, still continue to operate. Even after the husband is brought to feel a perfect indifference for his wife, he still likes to see her decorated in a style which may serve to justify his choice. He encourages her to set off her person, not so much for his own gratification, as that his self-love may be flattered, by her continuing to attract the admiration of those whose opinion is the standard by which he measures his fame, and which fame is to stand him in the stead of happiness. Thus is she necessarily exposed to the two-fold temptation of being at once neglected by her husband, and exhibited as an object of attraction to other men. If she escape this complicated danger, she will be indebted for her preservation not to his prudence, but to her own principles.

In some of these modish marriages, instead of the decorous neatness, the pleasant intercourse, and the mutual warmth of communication of the once social dinner, the late and uninteresting meal is commonly hurried over by the languid and slovenly pair, that the one may have time to dress for his club and the other for her party. And in these cold abstracted *têtes-à-têtes*, they often take as little pains to entertain each other

as if the one was precisely the only human being in the world in whose eyes the other did not feel it necessary to appear agreeable.

Now if these young and, perhaps, really amiable persons could struggle against the imperious tyranny of Fashion, and contrive to pass a little time together, so as to get acquainted with each other; and if each would live in the lively and conscientious exercise of those talents and attractions which they sometimes know how to produce on occasions not *quite* so justifiable; they would, I am persuaded, often find out each other to be very agreeable people. And both of them, delighted and delighting, receiving and bestowing happiness, would no longer be driven to the necessity of perpetually escaping from home as from the only scene which offers no possible materials for pleasure. The steady and growing attachment, improved by unbounded confidence and mutual interchange of sentiments; judgment ripening, and experience strengthening that esteem which taste and inclination first inspired; each party studying to promote the eternal as well as temporal happiness of the other; each correcting the errors, improving the principles, and confirming the faith of the beloved object: this would enrich the feeling heart with gratifications which the insolvent world has not to bestow: such a heart would compare its interesting domestic scenes with the vapid pleasures of public resort, till it would fly to its own home, not from necessity, but taste; not from custom, but choice; not from duty, but delight.

It may seem a contradiction to have asserted, that beings of all ages, tempers, and talents, should with such unremitting industry follow up any way of life, if they did not find some enjoyment in it; yet I appeal to the bosoms of these incessant hunters in the chase of pleasure, whether they are really happy. No:—in the full tide and torrent of diversion, in the full blaze of gaiety and splendour,

The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy?

But there is an anxious restlessness excited by the pursuit, which, if not interesting, is bustling. There is the dread, and partly the discredit, of being suspected of having one hour unmortgaged, not only to successive but to contending engagements; this it is, and not the pleasure of the engagement itself, which is the object. There is an agitation in the arrangements which imposes itself on the vacant heart for happiness. There is a tumult kept up in the spirits which is a busy though treacherous substitute for comfort. The multiplicity of solicitations soothes vanity. The very regret that they cannot be all accepted has its charms; for dignity is flattered because refusal implies importance, and pre-engagement intimates celebrity. Then there is the joy of being invited when others are neglected; the triumph of showing our less modish friend that we are going where she cannot come; and the feigned regret at being *obliged* to go, assumed before her who is half wild at being obliged to stay away. There is the

secret art of exciting envy in the very act of bespeaking compassion; and of challenging respect by representing their engagements as duties, oppressive, indeed, but indispensable. These are some of the supplemental shifts for happiness with which vanity contrives to feed her hungry followers, too eager to be nice.*

In the succession of open houses, in which pleasure is to be started and pursued on any given night, the actual place is never taken into the account of enjoyment; the scene of which is always supposed to lie in any place where her votaries happen not to be. Pleasure has no present tense; but in the house which her pursuers have just quitted, and in the house to which they are just hastening, a stranger might conclude the slippery goddess had really fixed her throne, and that her worshippers considered the existing scene, which they seem compelled to suffer, but from which they are eager to escape, as really detaining them from some positive joy to which they are flying in the next crowd; till, if he met them there, he would find the component parts of each precisely the same. He would hear the same stated phrases interrupted, not answered, by the same stated re-

* The precaution which is taken against the possibility of being unengaged by the long interval between the invitation and the period of its accomplishment, reminds us of what historians remark of the citizens of ancient Crotona, who used to send their invitations a year before the time, that the guests might prepare both their dress and their appetite for the visit.

plies, the unfinished sentence "driven adverse to the winds," by pressing multitudes; the same warm regret mutually exchanged by two *friends* (who had been expressly denied to each other all the winter) that they had not met before; the same soft and smiling sorrow at being *torn away* from each other now; the same avowed anxiety to renew the meeting, with, perhaps, the same secret resolution to avoid it. He would hear described, with the same pathetic earnestness, the difficulties of getting into this house, and the dangers of getting out of the last! the perilous retreat of former nights, effected amidst the shock of chariots, and the clang of contending coachmen! — a retreat, indeed, effected with a skill and peril little inferior to that of the *Ten Thousand*, and detailed with far juster triumph; for that which happened only once in a life to the Grecian hero occurs to these British heroines every night. There is one point of resemblance, indeed, between them, in which the comparison fails; for the commander, with a *mauvaise honte* at which a true female veteran would blush, is remarkable for never *naming himself*.

With "mysterious reverence" I forbear to descant on those serious and interesting rites, for the more august and solemn celebration of which, Fashion nightly convenes these splendid myriads to her more sumptuous temples. Rites! which, when engaged in with due devotion, absorb the whole soul, and call every passion into exercise, except, indeed, those of love, and peace, and kindness, and gentleness. Inspiring rites! which stimulate fear,

rouse hope, kindle zeal, quicken dulness, sharpen discernment, exercise memory, inflame curiosity! Rites! in short, in the due performance of which, all the energies and attentions, all the powers and abilities, all the abstraction and exertion, all the diligence and devotedness, all the sacrifice of time, all the contempt of ease, all the neglect of sleep, all the oblivion of care, all the risks of fortune (half of which, if directed to their true objects, would change the very face of the world); all these are concentrated to one point; — a point in which the wise and the weak, the learned and the ignorant, the fair and the frightful, the sprightly and the dull, the rich and the poor, the patrician and plebeian, meet in one common and uniform equality; an equality as religiously respected in these solemnities, in which all distinctions are levelled at a blow, and of which the very spirit is therefore democratical, as it is combated in all other instances.

Behold four Kings in majesty rever'd,
With hoary whiskers and a forked beard;
And four fair Queens, whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And party-colour'd troops, a shining train,
Drawn forth to combat on the velvet plain.*

* Rape of the Lock.

CHAP. XVIII.

ON PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

It is not proposed to enter the long-contested field of controversy as to the individual amusements which may be considered as safe and lawful for those women of the higher class who make a strict profession of Christianity. The judgment they will be likely to form for themselves on the subject, and the plan they will consequently adopt, will depend much on the clearness or obscurity of their religious views, and on the greater or less progress they have made in their Christian course. It is in their choice of amusements that you are able, in some measure, to get acquainted with the real dispositions of mankind. In their *business*, in the leading employments of life, their path is in a good degree chalked out for them: there is, in this respect, a sort of general character, wherein the greater part, more or less, must coincide. But in their *pleasures* the choice is voluntary, the taste is self-directed, the propensity is independent, and, of course, the habitual state, the genuine bent and bias of the temper, are most likely to be seen in those pursuits which every person is at liberty to choose for himself.

When a truly religious principle shall have acquired such a degree of force as to produce that conscientious and habitual improvement of time

before recommended, it will discover itself by an increasing indifference and even deadness to those pleasures which are interesting to the world at large. A woman under the predominating influence of such a principle will begin to discover that the same thing which in itself is innocent may yet be comparatively wrong. She will begin to feel that there are many amusements and employments which, though they have nothing censurable in themselves, yet, if they be allowed to intrench on hours which ought to be dedicated to still better purposes, or if they are protracted to an undue length; or, above all, if, by softening and relaxing her mind, and dissipating her spirits, they so indispose her for better pursuits as to render subsequent duties a burden, they become, in that case, clearly wrong for her, whatever they may be for others. Now, as temptations of this sort are the peculiar dangers of better kind of characters, the sacrifice of such little gratifications as may *have no great harm in them*, come in among the daily calls to self-denial in a Christian.

The fine arts, for instance, polite literature, elegant society, these are among the lawful, and liberal, and becoming recreations of higher life; yet, if even these be cultivated to the neglect or exclusion of severer duties; if they interfere with serious studies, or disqualify the mind for religious exercises, it is an intimation that they have been too much indulged; and, under such circumstances, it might be the part of Christian circumspection to enquire if the time devoted to them ought not to

be abridged. Above all, a tender conscience will never lose sight of one safe rule of determining in all doubtful cases: if the point be so nice that though we hope, upon the whole, there *may* be no harm in engaging in it, we may, at least, be always quite sure that there *can* be no harm in letting it alone. The adoption of this simple rule would put a period to much unprofitable casuistry.

The principle of being responsible for the use of time once fixed in the mind, the conscientious Christian will be making a continual progress in the great art of turning time to account. In the first stages of her religion, she will have abstained from pleasures which began a *little* to wound the conscience, or which assumed a questionable shape; but she will probably have abstained with regret, and with a secret wish that conscience *could* have permitted her to keep well with pleasure and religion too. But you may discern in her subsequent course that she has reached a more advanced stage, by her beginning to neglect even such pleasures or employments as have no moral turpitude in them, but are merely what are called innocent. This relinquishment arises, not so much from her feeling still more the restraints of religion, as from the improvement in her religious taste. Pleasures cannot now attach her merely from their being innocent, unless they are likewise interesting; and to be interesting they must be consonant to her superinduced views. She is not contented to spend a large portion of her time harmlessly; it must be spent profitably also. Nay, if she be indeed ear-

nestly "pressing towards the mark," it will not be even enough for her that her present pursuit be good, if she be convinced that it might be still better. Her contempt of ordinary enjoyments will increase in a direct proportion to her increased relish for those pleasures which religion enjoins and bestows. So that, at length, if it were possible to suppose that an angel could come down to take off, as it were, the interdict, and to invite her to resume all the pleasures she had renounced, and to resume them with complete impunity, she would reject the invitation, because, from an improvement in her spiritual taste, she would despise those delights from which she had at first abstained through fear. Till her will and affections come heartily to be engaged in the service of God, the progress will not be comfortable; but when once they are so engaged, the attachment to this service will be cordial, and her heart will not desire to go back and toil again in the drudgery of the world; for her religion has not so much given her a new creed, as a new heart and a new life.

As her views are become new, so her tempers, dispositions, tastes, actions, pursuits, choice of company, choice of amusements, are new also; her employment of time is changed; her turn of conversation is altered; "old things are passed away, all things are become new." In dissipated and worldly society, she will seldom fail to feel a sort of uneasiness, which will produce one of these two effects,—she will either, as proper seasons present themselves, struggle hard to introduce such sub-

jects as may be useful to others; or, supposing that she finds herself unable to effect this, she will, as far as she prudently can, absent herself from all unprofitable kind of society. Indeed her manner of conducting herself under these circumstances may serve to furnish her with a test of her own sincerity. For while people are contending for a little more of this amusement, and pleading for a little extension of that gratification, and fighting in order that they may hedge in a little more territory to their pleasure-ground, they are exhibiting a kind of evidence against themselves, that they are not yet "renewed in the spirit of their mind."

It has been warmly urged as an objection to certain religious books, and particularly against a recent work of high worth and celebrity, by a distinguished layman *, that they have set the standard of self-denial higher than reason or even than Christianity requires. These works do, indeed, elevate the general tone of religion to a higher pitch than is quite convenient to those who are at infinite pains to construct a comfortable and comprehensive plan, which shall unite the questionable pleasures of this world with the promised happiness of the next. I say it has been sometimes objected, even by those readers who on the whole greatly admire the particular work alluded to, that it is unreasonably strict in the preceptive and prohibitory parts; and especially that it individually and specifically forbids certain fashionable amusements, with a severity not to be found in the Scrip-

* Practical View, &c. by Mr. Wilberforce.

tures; and is scrupulously rigid in condemning diversions against which nothing is said in the New Testament. Each objector, however, is so far reasonable, as only to beg quarter for his own favourite diversion, and generously abandons the defence of those in which he himself has no particular pleasure.

But these objectors do not seem to understand the true genius of Christianity: they do not consider that it is the character of the Gospel to exhibit a scheme of principles, of which it is the tendency to infuse such a spirit of holiness as must be utterly incompatible, not only with customs decidedly vicious, but with the very spirit of worldly pleasure: they do not consider that Christianity is neither a table of ethics nor a system of opinions, nor a bundle of rods to punish, nor an exhibition of rewards to allure, nor a scheme of restraints to terrify, nor merely a code of laws to restrict; but it is a new principle infused into the heart by the Word and the Spirit of God; out of which principle will inevitably grow right opinions, renewed affections, correct morals, pure desires, heavenly tempers, and holy habits, with an invariable desire of pleasing God, and a constant fear of offending him. A real Christian, whose heart is once thoroughly imbued with this principle, can no more return to the amusements of the world than a philosopher can be refreshed with the diversions of the vulgar, or a man be amused with the recreations of a child. The New Testament is not a mere statute-book: it is not a table, where every offence

is detailed, and its corresponding penalty annexed: it is not so much a *compilation* as a *spirit* of laws: it does not so much prohibit every individual wrong practice, as suggest a temper, and implant a general principle with which every wrong practice is incompatible. It did not, for instance, so much attack the then reigning and corrupt fashions, which were probably like the fashions of other countries, temporary and local, as it struck at that worldliness, which is the root and stock from which all corrupt fashions proceed.

The prophet Isaiah, who addressed himself more particularly to the Israelitish women, inveighed not only against vanity, luxury, and immodesty, in general, but with great propriety censured even those precise instances of each to which the women of rank in the particular country he was addressing were especially addicted; nay, he enters into the minute detail * of their very personal decorations, and brings specific charges against several instances of their levity and extravagance of apparel; meaning, however, chiefly to censure the turn of character which these indicated. But the Gospel of Christ, which was to be addressed to all ages, stations, and countries, seldom contains any such detailed animadversions; for though many of the censurable modes which the prophet so severely reprobated continued probably to be still prevalent in Jerusalem in the days of our Saviour, yet how little would it have suited the universality of his mission to have confined his

* Isaiah, chap. iii.

preaching to such local, limited, and fluctuating customs! not but that there are many texts which actually *do* define the Christian conduct as well as temper, with sufficient particularity to serve as a condemnation of many practices which are pleaded for, and often to point pretty directly at them.

It would be well for those modish Christians who vindicate excessive vanity in dress, expense and decoration, on the principle of their being mere matters of indifference, and no where prohibited in the Gospel, to consider that such practices strongly mark the temper and spirit with which they are connected, and in that view are so little creditable to the Christian profession, as to furnish a just subject of suspicion against the piety of those who indulge in them.

Had Saint Peter, on that memorable day when he added three thousand converts to the Church by a single sermon, narrowed his subject to a remonstrance against this diversion, or that public place, or the other vain amusement, it might, indeed, have suited the case of some of the Jewish converts who were present; but such restrictions as might have been appropriate to *them* would probably not have applied to the cases of the Parthians and Medes, of which his audience was partly composed; or such as might have belonged to them would have been totally inapplicable to the Cretes and Arabians; or again, those which suited these would not have applied to the Elamites and Mesopotamians. By

such partial and circumscribed addresses, his multifarious audience, composed of all nations and countries, would not have been, as we are told they were, "pricked to the heart." But when he preached on the broad ground of general "repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ," it was no wonder that they all cried out, "What shall we do?" These collected foreigners, at their return home, must have found very different usages to be corrected in their different countries; of course a detailed restriction of the popular abuses at Jerusalem would have been of little use to strangers returning to their respective nations. The ardent apostle, therefore, acted more consistently in communicating to them the large and comprehensive spirit of the Gospel, which should at once involve all their scattered and separate duties, as well as reprove all their scattered and separate corruptions; for the whole always includes a part, and the greater involves the less. Christ and his disciples, instead of limiting their condemnation to the peculiar vanities reprehended by Isaiah, embraced the very soul and principle of them all, in such exhortations as the following: — "Be ye not conformed to the world:" — "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" — "The fashion of this world passeth away." Our Lord and his apostles, whose future unselected audience was to be made up out of the various inhabitants of the whole world, attacked the evil *heart*, out of which

all those incidental, local, peculiar, and popular corruptions proceeded.

In the time of Christ and his immediate followers, the luxury and intemperance of the Romans had arisen to a pitch before unknown in the world; but as the same Gospel which its Divine Author and his disciples were then preaching to the hungry and necessitous, was afterwards to be preached to high and low, not excepting the Roman emperors themselves, the large precept, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," was likely to be of more general use than any separate exhortation to temperance, to thankfulness, to moderation as to quantity or expense; which last, indeed, must always be left in some degree to the judgment and circumstances of the individual.

When the apostle of the Gentiles visited the "saints of Cæsar's household," he could hardly fail to have heard, nor could he have heard without abhorrence, of some of the fashionable amusements in the court of Nero. He must have reflected with peculiar indignation on many things which were practised in the Circensian games, yet, instead of pruning this corrupt tree, and singling out even the inhuman gladiatorial sports for the object of his condemnation, he laid his axe to the root of all corruption, by preaching to them that Gospel of Christ of which "he was not ashamed," and showing to them that believed, that "it was the power of God and the wisdom of God." Of this Gospel the great object was, to attack not one

popular evil, but the whole body of sin. Now, the doctrine of Christ crucified was the most appropriate means for destroying this; for by what other means could the fervid imagination of the apostle have so powerfully enforced the heinousness of sin, as by insisting on the costliness of the sacrifice which was offered for its expiation? It is somewhat remarkable, that about the very time of his preaching to the Romans, the public taste had sunk to such an excess of depravity, that the very women engaged in those shocking encounters with the gladiators.

But, in the first place, it was better that the right practice of his hearers should grow out of the right principle; and next, his specifically reprobating these diversions might have had this ill effect, that succeeding ages, seeing that they in their amusements came somewhat short of those dreadful excesses of the polished Romans, would only have plumed themselves on their own comparative superiority; and, on this principle, even the bull-fights of Madrid might in time have had their panegyrists. The truth is, the apostle knew that such abominable corruptions could never subsist together with Christianity, and, in fact, the honour of abolishing these barbarous diversions was reserved for Constantine, the first Christian emperor.

Besides, the apostles, by inveighing against some *particular* diversions, might have seemed to sanction all which they did not actually censure; and as, in the lapse of time and the revolution of

governments, customs change and manners fluctuate, had a minute reprehension of the fashions of the then existing age been published in the New Testament, that portion of Scripture must in time have become obsolete even in that very same country, when the fashions themselves should have changed. Paul and his brother apostles knew that their epistles would be the oracles of the Christian world when these temporary diversions would be forgotten. In consequence of this knowledge, by the universal precept to avoid "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," they have prepared a lasting antidote against the *principle* of all corrupt pleasures, which will ever remain equally applicable to the loose fashions of all ages and of every country to the end of the world.

Therefore, to vindicate diversions which are in themselves unchristian, on the pretended ground that they are not specifically condemned in the Gospel, would be little less absurd than if the heroes of Newmarket should bring it as a proof that their periodical meetings are not condemned in Scripture, because Saint Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, did not speak against these diversions; and that in availing himself of the Isthmian games, as a happy illustration of the Christian race, he did not drop any censure on the practice itself; a practice which was, indeed, as much more pure than the races of Christian Britain as the moderation of being contented with the triumph of a crown of leaves is superior to that criminal

spirit of gambling which iniquitously enriches the victor by beggaring the competitor.

Local abuses, as we have said, were not the object of a book whose instructions were to be of universal and lasting application. As a proof of this, little is said in the Gospel of the then prevailing corruption of polygamy; nothing against the savage custom of exposing children, or even against slavery; nothing expressly against suicide or duelling; the last Gothic custom, indeed, did not exist among the crimes of *Paganism*. But is there is not an implied prohibition against polygamy in the general denunciation against adultery? Is not exposing of children condemned in that charge against the Romans, that "they were without natural affection?" Is there not a strong censure against slavery conveyed in the command to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you?" and against suicide and duelling, in the general prohibition against murder, which is strongly enforced and affectingly amplified by the solemn manner in which murder is traced back to its first seed of anger, in the sermon on the mount?

Thus it is clear, that when Christ sent the Gospel to all nations, he meant that that Gospel should proclaim those prime truths, general laws, and fundamental doctrines, which must necessarily involve the prohibition of all individual, local, and inferior errors; errors which could not have been specifically guarded against, without having a distinct Gospel for every country, or without swelling

the divine volume into such inconvenient length as would have defeated one great end of its promulgation.* And while its leading principles are of universal application, it must always, in some measure, be left to the discretion of the preacher, and to the conscience of the hearer, to examine whether the life and habits of those who profess it are conformable to its main spirit and design.

The same Divine Spirit which dictated the Holy Scriptures is promised to purify the hearts and renew the natures of repenting and believing Christians; and the compositions it inspired are in some degree analogous to the workmanship it effects. It prohibited the vicious practices of the apostolical days, by prohibiting the passions and principles which rendered them gratifying; and still working in like manner on the hearts of real Christians, it corrects the taste which was accustomed to find its proper gratification in the resorts of vanity; and thus effectually provides for the reformation of the habits, and infuses a relish for rational and domestic enjoyments, and for whatever can administer pleasure to that spirit of peace, and love, and hope, and joy, which animates and rules the renewed heart of the true Christian.

But there is a portion of Scripture which, though to a superficial reader it may seem but very remotely connected with the present subject, yet, to readers of another cast, seems to settle the matter beyond controversy. In the parable of the great supper, this important truth is held out to

* "To the *poor* the Gospel is preached." Luke, vii. 22.

us, that even things *good in themselves* may be the means of our eternal ruin, by drawing our hearts from God, and causing us to make light of the offers of the Gospel. One invited guest had bought an estate, another had made a purchase, equally blameless, of oxen; a third had married a wife, an act not illaudable in itself. They had all different reasons, none of which appeared to have any moral turpitude; but they all agreed in this, *to decline the invitation to the supper.* The worldly possessions of one, the worldly business of another, and what should be particularly attended to, the love to his dearest relative, of a third, (a love, by the way, not only allowed but commanded in Scripture,) were brought forward as excuses for not attending to the important business of religion. The consequence, however, was the same to all. "None of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper." If, then, things *innocent*, things *necessary*, things *laudable*, things *commanded*, become sinful, when by unseasonable or excessive indulgence they detain the heart and affections from God, how vain will all those arguments necessarily be rendered, which are urged by the advocates for certain amusements, on the ground of their *harmlessness*; if those amusements serve — not to mention any positive evil which may belong to them — in like manner to draw away the thoughts and affections from all spiritual objects.

To conclude; when this topic happens to become the subject of conversation, instead of addressing severe and pointed attacks to young ladies on the

sin of attending places of diversion, would it not be better first to endeavour to excite in them that principle of Christianity with which such diversions seem not quite compatible; as the physician, who visits a patient in an eruptive fever, pays little attention to those spots which to the ignorant appear to be the disease, except, indeed, so far as they serve as indications to let him into its nature, but goes straight to the root of the malady? He attacks the fever, he lowers the pulse, he changes the system, he corrects the general habit; well knowing that if he can but restore the vital principle of health, the spots, which were nothing but symptoms, will die away of themselves.

In instructing others, we should imitate our Lord and his apostles, and not always aim our blow at each particular corruption; but should make it our business to convince our pupil that what brings forth the evil fruit she exhibits cannot be a branch of the true vine; we should thus avail ourselves of individual corruptions, for impressing her with a sense of the necessity of purifying the common source from which they flow — a corrupt nature. Thus making it our grand business to rectify the heart, we pursue the true, the compendious, the only method of producing universal holiness.

I would, however, take leave of those amiable and not ill-disposed young persons, who complain of the rigour of human prohibitions, and declare, "they meet with no such strictness in the Gospel," by asking them, with the most affectionate earnest-

ness, if they can conscientiously reconcile their nightly attendance at every public place which they frequent, with such precepts as the following: "Redeeming the time:" — "Watch and pray:" — "Watch, for ye know not at what time your Lord cometh:" — "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil:" — "Set your affections on things above:" — "Be ye spiritually minded:" — "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts?" And I would venture to offer one criterion, by which the persons in question may be enabled to decide on the positive innocence and safety of such diversions; I mean, provided they are sincere in their scrutiny, and honest in their avowal. If, on their return at night from those places, they find they can retire and "commune with their own hearts;" if they find the love of God operating with undiminished force on their minds; if they can "bring every thought into subjection;" if they can subdue every wandering imagination; if they can soberly examine into their own state of mind: — I do not say if they can do all this perfectly and without distraction; (for who almost can do this at any time?) but if they can do it with the same *degree* of seriousness, pray with the same *degree* of fervour, and renounce the world in as great a *measure* as at other times; and if they can lie down with a peaceful consciousness of having avoided in the evening "that temptation" which they had prayed not to be "led into" in the morning, they may then more reasonably hope that all is well, and that they are not speaking false peace to

their hearts. But if we cannot beg the blessing of our Maker on whatever we are going to do or to enjoy, and afterwards praise Him for the enjoyment, is it not an unequivocal proof that the thing ought not to be done or enjoyed? On all the rational gratifications of society, on all healthful and temperate exercise, on the delights of friendship, arts, and polished letters, on the exquisite pleasures resulting from the enjoyment of rural scenery, and the beauties of nature; — on the innocent participation of these we may ask the Divine favour — for the sober enjoyment of these we may thank the Divine beneficence: but do we feel equally disposed to invoke blessings or return praises for gratifications found (to say no worse) in levity, in vanity, and waste of time? If these tests were fairly used; if these experiments were honestly tried; if these examinations were conscientiously made, may we not, without offence, presume to ask, — *Could* our numerous places of public resort, *could* our ever-multiplying scenes of more select but not less dangerous diversion, nightly overflow with an excess hitherto unparalleled in the annals of pleasure? *

* If I might presume to recommend a book which of all others exposes the insignificance, vanity, littleness, and emptiness of the world, I should, not hesitate to name Mr. Law's "*Serious Call to a devout and holy Life.*" Few writers, except Pascal, have directed so much acuteness of reasoning and so much pointed wit to this object. He not only makes the reader afraid of a worldly life on account of its sinfulness, but ashamed of it on account of its folly. Few men, perhaps,

have had a deeper insight into the human heart, or have more skilfully probed its corruptions; yet on points of doctrine his views do not seem to be just, and his disquisitions are often unsound and fanciful; so that a *general* perusal of his works would neither be profitable or intelligible. To a fashionable woman immersed in the vanities of life, or to a busy man overwhelmed with its cares, I know no book so applicable, or likely to exhibit with equal force the vanity of the shadows they are pursuing. But, even in this work, Law is not a safe guide to evangelical light; and, in many of his others, he is highly visionary and whimsical; and I have known some excellent persons who were first led by this admirable genius to see the wants of their own hearts, and the utter insufficiency of the world to fill up the craving void, who, though they became eminent for piety and self-denial, have had their usefulness abridged, and whose minds have contracted something of a monastic severity by an unqualified perusal of Mr. Law. True Christianity does not call on us to starve our bodies, but our corruptions. As the *mortified apostle of the holy and self-denying Baptist*, preaching repentance because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Mr. Law has no superior. As a preacher of salvation on scriptural grounds, I would follow other guides.

CHAP. XIX.

A WORLDLY SPIRIT INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY.

Is it not whimsical to hear such complaints against the strictness of religion as we are frequently hearing, from beings who are voluntarily pursuing, as has been shown in the preceding chapters, a course of life which fashion makes infinitely more severe. How really burdensome would Christianity be if she enjoined such sedulous application, such unremitting labours, such a succession of fatigues! If religion commanded such hardships and self-denial, such days of hurry, such evenings of exertion, such nights of broken rest, such perpetual sacrifices of quiet, such exile from family delights, as *Fashion* imposes, then, indeed, the service of Christianity would no longer merit its present appellation of being a "*reasonable* service;" then the name of perfect slavery might be justly applied to that which we are told in the beautiful language of our Church is "a service of perfect freedom;" a service, the great object of which is "to deliver us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

A worldly temper, by which I mean a disposition to prefer worldly pleasures, worldly satisfactions, and

worldly advantages, to the immortal interests of the soul, and to let worldly considerations actuate us instead of the dictates of religion in the concerns of ordinary life; — a worldly temper, I say, is not, like almost any other fault, the effect of passion or the consequence of surprise when the heart is off its guard. It is not excited incidentally by the operation of external circumstances on the infirmity of nature; but it is the vital spirit, the essential soul, the living principle of evil. It is not so much an act, as a state of being; not so much an occasional complaint, as a tainted constitution of mind. If it does not always show itself in extraordinary excesses, it has no perfect intermission. Even when it is not immediately tempted to break out into overt and specific acts, it is at work within, stirring up the heart to disaffection against holiness, and infusing a kind of moral disability to whatever is intrinsically right. It infects and depraves all the powers and faculties of the soul: for it operates on the understanding, by blinding it to whatever is spiritually good; on the will, by making it averse from God; on the affections, by disordering and sensualising them; so that one may almost say to those who are under the supreme dominion of this spirit, what was said to the hosts of Joshua, "Ye *cannot* serve the Lord."

This worldliness of mind is not at all commonly understood, and for the following reason: — People suppose that in this world our chief business is with the things of this world, and that to conduct the business of this world well, that is, conformably

to moral principles, is the chief substance of moral and true goodness. Religion, if introduced at all into the system, only makes its occasional, and, if I may so speak, its holiday appearance. To bring religion into every thing is thought incompatible with the due attention to the things of this life; and so it would be, if by religion were meant *talking* about religion. The phrase, therefore, is: "We cannot always be praying; we must mind our business and our social duties as well as our devotion." Worldly business being thus subjected to worldly, though in some degree moral, maxims, the mind during the conduct of business grows worldly; and a continually increasing secular spirit dims the sight and relaxes the moral principle on which the affairs of the world are conducted, as well as indisposes the mind for all the exercise of devotion.

But this temper, as far as relates to *business*, so much assumes the semblance of goodness, that those who have not right views are apt to mistake the carrying on the affairs of life on a tolerably moral principle for religion. They do not see that the evil lies not in their so carrying on business, but in their not carrying on the things of this life in subserviency to the things of eternity; in their not carrying them on with the unintermitting idea of responsibility. The evil does not lie in their not being always on their knees, but in their not bringing their religion from the closet into the world: in their not bringing the spirit of the Sunday's devotions into the transactions of the

week: in not transforming their religion from a dry, and speculative, and inoperative system, into a lively, and influential, and unceasing principle of action.

Though there are, blessed be God! in the most exalted stations, women who adorn their Christian profession by a consistent conduct, yet are there not others who are labouring hard to unite the irreconcilable interests of earth and heaven? who, while they will not relinquish one jot of what *this* world has to bestow, yet by no means renounce their hopes of a better? who do not think it unreasonable that their indulging in the fullest possession of present pleasures should not interfere with the most certain reversion of future glory? who, after living in the most unbounded gratification of ease, vanity, and luxury, fancy that heaven must be attached of course to a life of which Christianity is the outward profession, and which has not been stained by any flagrant or dishonourable act of guilt?

Are there not many who, while they entertain a respect for religion (for I address not the unbelieving or the licentious), while they believe its truths, observe its forms, and would be shocked not to be thought religious, are yet immersed in this life of disqualifying worldliness? who, though they made a conscience of going to the public worship once on a Sunday, and are scrupulously observant of the other rites of the Church, yet hesitate not to give up all the rest of their time to the very same pursuits and pleasures which occupy

the hearts and engross the lives of those looser characters whose enjoyment is not obstructed by any dread of a future account? and who, acting on the wise principle of "the children of this world," are making the most of the present state of being from the conviction that there is no other to be expected?

It must be owned, indeed, that faith in unseen things is at times lamentably weak and defective even in the truly pious; and that it is so, is the subject of their grief and humiliation. O! how does the real Christian take shame in the coldness of his belief, in the lowness of his attainments! How deeply does he lament that "when he would do good, evil is present with him!" — "that the life he now lives in the flesh, is" not, in the degree it ought to be, "by faith in the Son of God!" Yet one thing is clear; however weak his belief may seem to be, it is evident that his actions are principally governed by it; he evinces his sincerity to others by a life in some good degree analogous to the doctrines he professes; while to himself he has at least this conviction, that faint as his confidence may be at times, low as may be his hope, and feeble as his faith may seem, yet at the worst of times he would not exchange that faint measure of trust, that feeble faith, that trembling hope, for all the actual pleasures and possessions of his most splendid acquaintance; and what is a proof of his sincerity, he never seeks the cure of his dejection, where they seek theirs, in the world, but in God.

But as to the faith of worldly persons, however

strong it may be in speculation, however orthodox their creed, however stout their profession, we cannot help fearing that it is a little defective in sincerity; for if there were in their minds a full persuasion of the truth of Revelation, and of the eternal bliss it promises, would it not be obvious to them that there must be more diligence for its attainment? We discover great ardour in carrying on worldly projects, because we believe the good which we are pursuing is real, and will reward the trouble of the pursuit; we believe *that* good is to be attained by diligence and we prudently proportion our earnestness to this conviction: when, therefore, we see persons professing a lively faith in a better world, yet labouring little to obtain an interest in it, can we forbear suspecting that their belief, not only of their own title to eternal happiness, but of eternal happiness itself, is not well grounded; and that, if they were to "examine themselves truly," and to produce the principle of such a relaxed morality, the faith would be found to be much of a piece with the practice?

The objections which disincline the world to make present sacrifices of pleasure with a view to obtaining eternal happiness, are such as apply to all the ordinary concerns of life. That is, men object chiefly to a religious course as tending to rob them of that actual pleasure which is within their reach, for the sake of a remote enjoyment. They object to giving up the seen good for the unseen. But do not almost all the transactions of

life come under the same description? Do we not give up present ease, and renounce present indulgence, in order to acquire a future? Do we not part with our current money for the reversion of an estate, which we know it will be a long time before we can possess? Nay, do not the most worldly often submit to an immediate inconvenience, by reducing their present income, in order to insure to themselves a larger capital for their future subsistence?

Now "faith, which is the substance of things hoped for," is meant to furnish the soul with present support, while it satisfies it as to the security on which it has lent itself; just as a man's bonds and mortgages assure him that he is really rich, though he has not all the money in hand ready to spend at the moment. Those who truly believe the Bible must in the same manner be content to live on its promises, by which God has, as it were, pledged himself for their future blessedness.

Even that very spirit of enjoyment which leads the persons in question so studiously to possess themselves of the qualifications necessary for the pleasures of the present scene; that understanding and foresight, which lead them to acquire such talents as may enable them to figure in the resorts of gaiety here; that very spirit should induce those who are really looking for a future state of happiness to wish to acquire something of the taste, and temper, and talents, which may be considered as qualifications for the enjoyment of that happiness. The neglect of doing this must pro-

ceed from one of these two causes; either they must think their present course a safe and proper course, or they must think that death is to produce some sudden and surprising alteration in the human character. But the office of death is to transport us to a new state, not to transform us to a new nature; the stroke of death is intended to effect our deliverance out of this world, and our introduction into another; but it is not likely to effect any sudden and wonderful, much less a total, change in our hearts or our tastes: so far from this, that we are assured in Scripture, "that he that is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is holy will be holy still." Though we believe that death will completely cleanse the holy soul from its remaining pollutions, that it will exchange defective sanctification into perfect purity, entangling temptation into complete freedom; suffering and affliction into health and joy; doubts and fears into perfect security, and oppressive weariness into everlasting rest; yet there is no magic in the wand of death which will convert an unholy soul into a holy one. And it is awful to reflect, that such tempers as have the allowed predominance here will maintain it for ever; that such as the will is when we close our eyes upon the things of time, such it will be when we open them on those of eternity. The mere act of death no more fits us for heaven, than the mere act of the mason who pulls down our old house fits us for a new one. If we die with our hearts running over with the love of the world, there is no promise to lead us to

expect that we shall rise with them full of the love of God. Death, indeed, will show us to ourselves such as we are, but will not make us such as we are not; and it will be too late to be acquiring self-knowledge when we can no longer turn it to any account but that of tormenting ourselves. To illustrate this truth still further by an allusion familiar to the persons I address:—the drawing up the curtain at the theatre, though it serve to introduce us to the entertainments behind it, does not create in us any new faculties to understand or to relish those entertainments: these must have been already acquired; they must have been provided beforehand, and brought with us to the place, if we would relish the pleasures of the place; for the entertainment can only operate on that taste we carry to it. It is too late to be acquiring when we ought to be enjoying.

That spirit of prayer and praise, those dispositions of love, meekness, "peace, quietness, and assurance;" that indifference to the fashion of a world which is passing away; that longing after deliverance from sin, that desire of holiness, together with all "the fruits of the spirit" here, must surely make some part of our qualification for the enjoyment of a world, the pleasures of which are all spiritual. And who can conceive any thing comparable to the awful surprise of a soul long immersed in the indulgences of vanity and pleasure, yet all the while lulled by the self-complacency of a religion of mere forms; who, while it counted upon heaven as a thing of course, had

made no preparation for it? Who can conceive any surprise comparable to that of such a soul on shutting its eyes on a world of sense, of which all the objects and delights were so congenial to its nature, and opening them on a world of spirits of which all the characters of enjoyment are of a nature new, unknown, surprising, and specifically different? pleasures more inconceivable to its apprehension, and more unsuitable to its taste, than the gratifications of one sense are to the organs of another, or than the most exquisite works of art and genius to absolute imbecility of mind.

While we would with deep humility confess that we cannot purchase heaven by any works or right dispositions of our own; while we gratefully acknowledge that it must be purchased for us by "Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood;" yet let us remember that we have no reason to expect we could be capable of enjoying the pleasures of a heaven so purchased without a preparatory heavenly-mindedness.

When those persons who are apt to expect as much comfort from religion as if their hearts were not full of the world, now and then, in a fit of honesty or low spirits, complain that Christianity does not make them as good and as happy as they were led to except from that assurance, that "great peace have they who love the law of God," and that "they who wait on him shall want no manner of thing that is good;" when they lament that the paths of religion are not those "paths of pleasantness" which they were led to expect;

their case reminds one of a celebrated physician, who used to say, that the reason why his prescriptions, which commonly cured the poor and the temperate, did so little good among his rich and luxurious patients, was, that while he was labouring to remove the disease by medicines, of which they only took drachms, grains, and scruples; they were inflaming it by a multiplicity of injurious aliments, which they swallowed by ounces, pounds, and pints.

These fashionable Christians should be reminded, that there was no half-engagement made for them at their baptism; that they are not partly their own, and partly their Redeemer's. He that is "bought with a price," is the sole property of the purchaser. Faith does not consist merely in submitting the opinions of the understanding, but the dispositions of the heart: religion is not a sacrifice of sentiments, but of affections: it is not the tribute of fear extorted from a slave, but the voluntary homage of love paid by a child.

Neither does a Christian's piety consist in living in retreat, and railing at the practices of the world, while, perhaps, his heart is full of the spirit of that world, at which he is railing: but it consists in *subduing* the spirit of the world, resisting its temptations, and opposing its practices, even while his duty obliges him to live in it.

Nor is the spirit or the love of the world confined to those women only who are making a figure in it; nor are its operations bounded by the precincts of the metropolis, nor by the limited re-

gions of first-rate rank and splendour. She who inveighs against the luxury and excesses of London, and solaces herself in her own comparative sobriety, because her more circumscribed fortune compels her to take up with the second-hand pleasures of successive watering-places; if she pursue these pleasures with avidity, is governed by the same spirit: and she whose still narrower opportunities stint her to the petty diversions of her country neighbourhood, if she be busied in swelling and enlarging her smaller sphere of vanity and idleness, however she may comfort herself with her own comparative goodness, by railing at the unattainable pleasures of the watering-place, or the still more unapproachable joys of the capital, is governed by the same spirit: for she who is as vain, as dissipated, and as extravagant as actual circumstances admit, would be as vain, as dissipated, and as extravagant as the gayest objects of her invective actually are, if she could change places with them. It is not merely by what we do that we can be sure the spirit of the world has no dominion over us, but by fairly considering what we should probably do if more were in our power.

The worldly Christian, if I may be allowed such a palpable contradiction in terms, must not imagine that she acquits herself of her religious obligations by paying in her mere weekly oblation of prayer. There is no covenant by which communion with God is restricted to an hour or two on the Sunday: she must not imagine she acquits

herself by setting apart a few particular days in the year for the exercise of a periodical devotion, and then flying back to the world as eagerly as if she were resolved to repay herself with large interest for her short fit of self-denial; the stream of pleasure running with a more rapid current, from having been interrupted by this forced obstruction. And the avidity with which we have seen certain persons of a still less correct character than the class we have been considering, return to a whole year's carnival, after the self-imposed penance of a passion week gives a shrewd intimation that they considered the temporary abstraction less as an act of penitence for the past, than as a purchase of indemnity for the future. Such bare-weight Protestants prudently condition for retaining the popish doctrine of indulgences, which they buy, not indeed of the spiritual court of Rome, but of that secret, self-acquitting judge, which ignorance of its own turpitude, and of the strict requirements of the divine law, has established itself supreme in the tribunal of every unrenewed heart.

But the practice of self-examination is impeded by one clog, which renders it peculiarly inconvenient to the gay and worldly: for the royal prophet (who was, however, himself as likely as any one to be acquainted with the difficulties peculiar to greatness) has annexed as a concomitant to "communing with our own heart," that we should "*be still.*" Now this clause of the injunction annihilates the other by rendering it incompatible

with the present habits of fashionable life, of which *stillness* is clearly not one of the constituents. It would, however, greatly assist those who do not altogether decline the practice, if they were to establish into a rule the habit of detecting certain suspicious practices, by realising them, as it were, to their own minds, through the means of drawing them out in detail, and of placing them before their eyes clothed in language; for there is nothing that so effectually exposes an absurdity which has hitherto passed muster for want of such an inquisition, as giving it shape, and form, and body. How many things which now silently work themselves into the habit, and pass current without enquiry, would then shock us by their palpable inconsistency! Who, for instance, could stand the sight of such a debtor and creditor account as this: — *Item;* So many card-parties, balls, and operas due to me in the following year, for so many manuals, prayers, and meditations paid beforehand during the last six days in Lent? With how much indignation soever this suggestion may be treated; whatever offence may be taken at such a combination of the serious and the ludicrous; however we may revolt at the idea of such a composition with our Maker, when put into so many words; does not the habitual course of some go near to realise such a statement?

But "a Christian's *race*," as a venerable Prelate * observes, "is not run at so many *heats*," but is a constant course, a regular progress by

* Bishop Hopkins.

which we are continually gaining ground upon sin, and approaching nearer to the kingdom of God.

Am I, then, ridiculing this pious seclusion of contrite sinners? Am I, then, jesting at that "troubled spirit" which the Almighty has declared is his "acceptable sacrifice?" God forbid! Such reasonable retirements have been the practice and continue to be the comfort of some of the sincerest Christians; and *will* continue to be resorted to as long as Christianity, that is, as long as the world shall last. It is well to call off the thoughts, even for a short time, not only from sin and vanity, but even from the lawful pursuits of business and the laudable concerns of life; and at times to annihilate, as it were, the space which divides us from eternity:

> 'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
> And ask them what report they bore to heaven,
> And how they might have borne more welcome news.

Yet as to those who seek a short annual retreat as a mere form; who dignify with the idea of a religious retirement a week in which it is rather unfashionable to be seen in town; who retire with an unabated resolution to return to the maxims, the pleasures, and the spirit of that world which they do but mechanically renounce; is it not to be feared that this short secession, which does not even pretend to subdue the principle, but merely suspends the act, may only serve to set a keener edge on the appetite for the pleasures they are

quitting? Is it not to be feared that the bow may fly back with redoubled violence from having been unnaturally bent? that by varnishing over a life of vanity with the transient externals of a formal and temporary piety, they may the more dangerously skin over the troublesome soreness of a tender conscience, by laying

This flattering unction to the soul?

And is it not awfully to be apprehended that such devotions come in among those vain oblations which the Almighty has declared he will not accept? For, is it not among the delusions of a worldly piety, to consider Christianity as a thing, which cannot, indeed, safely be omitted, but which is to *be got over*; a certain quantity of which is, as it were, to be taken in the lump, with long intervals between the repetitions? Is it not among its delusions to consider religion as imposing a set of hardships, which *must* be occasionally encountered in order to procure a peaceable enjoyment of the long respite? — a short penalty for a long pleasure? that these severe conditions thus fulfilled, the acquitted Christian having paid the annual demand of a rigorous requisition, she may now lawfully return to her natural state; the old reckoning being adjusted, she may begin a new score, and receive the reward of her punctual obedience, in the resumed indulgence of those gratifications which she had for a short time laid aside as a hard task to please a hard master: but this task performed, and the master appeased, the

mind may discover its natural bent, in joyfully returning to the objects of its real choice? Whereas, is it not clear on the other hand, that if the religious exercises had produced the effect which it is the nature of true religion to produce, the penitent *could* not return with her old genuine alacrity to those habits of the world from which the pious weekly manuals through which she has been labouring with the punctuality of an almanac as to the day, and the accuracy of a bead-roll as to the number, were intended by the devout authors to rescue their reader?

I am far from insinuating, that this literal sequestration ought to be prolonged throughout the year, or that all the days of business are to be made equally days of solemnity and continued meditation. This earth is a place in which a much larger portion of a common Christian's time must be assigned to action than to contemplation. Women of the higher class were not sent into the world to shun society, but to improve it. They were not designed for the cold and visionary virtues of solitudes and monasteries, but for the amiable, and endearing, and useful offices of social life: they are of a religion which does not impose idle austerities, but which enjoins active duties; a religion which demands the most benevolent actions, and which requires them to be sanctified by the purest motives; a religion which does not condemn its followers to the comparatively easy task of seclusion *from* the world, but assigns them the more difficult province of living uncorrupted

in it; a religion which, while it forbids them "to follow a multitude to do *evil*," includes in that prohibition the sin of doing *nothing*, and which moreover enjoins them to be followers of him "who went about doing *good*."

But may we not reasonably contend, that though the same sequestration is not required, yet that the same *spirit* and *temper* which we would hope is thought necessary even by those on whom we are animadverting, during the occasional humiliation, must, by every real Christian, be extended throughout all the periods of the year? And when that is really the case, when once the spirit of religion shall indeed govern the heart, it will not only animate her religious actions and employments, but will gradually extend itself to the chastising her conversation, will discipline her thoughts, influence her common business, restrain her indulgences, and sanctify her very pleasures.

But it seems that many, who entertain a *general* notion of Christian duty, do not consider it as of universal and unremitting obligation, but rather as a duty binding at times on all, and at all times on some. To the attention of such we would recommend that very explicit address of our Lord on the subject of self-denial, the temper directly opposed to a worldly spirit: "And he said unto them ALL, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross DAILY." Those who think self-denial not of *universal* obligation, will observe the word *all*, and those who think the obligation not *constant* will attend to the term *daily*. These

two little words cut up by the root all the occasional religious observances grafted on a worldly life; all transient, periodical, and temporary acts of piety, which some seem willing to commute for a life of habitual thoughtlessness and vanity.

There is, indeed, scarcely a more pitiable being than one who, instead of making her religion the informing principle of all she does, has only just enough to keep her in continual fear; who drudges through her stinted exercises with a superstitious kind of terror, while her general life shows that the love of holiness is not the governing principle in her heart; who seems to suffer all the pains and penalties of Christianity, but is a stranger to "that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Let it not be thought a ludicrous invention, if the author hazard the producing a real illustration of these remarks, in the instance of a lady of this stamp, who returning from church on a very cold day, and remarking with a good deal of self-complacency how much she had suffered in the performance of her duty, comforted herself with emphatically adding, "that she hoped, however, it would *answer*."

There is this striking difference between the real and the worldly Christian — the former does not complain of the strictness of the divine law, but of the deficiencies of his own performance; while the worldly Christian is little troubled at his own failures, but deplores the strictness of the Divine requisitions. The one wishes that God would expect less, the other prays for strength to

do more. When the worldly person hears real Christians speak of their own low state, and acknowledge their extreme unworthiness; he really believes them to be worse than those who make no such humiliating confessions. He does not know that a mind which is at once deeply convinced of its own corruptions, and of the purity of the divine law, is so keenly alive to the perception of all sin as to be humbled by the commission of such as is comparatively small, and which these who have less correct views of Gospel-truth hardly allow to be sin at all. Such an one with Job says, "Now mine eye *seeth* Thee."

But there is no permanent comfort in any religion, short of that by which the diligent Christian strives that all his actions shall have the love of God for their motive, and the glory of God, as well as his own salvation, for their end; while to go about to balance our good and bad actions one against the other, and to take comfort in the occasional predominance of the former, while the cultivation of the principle from which they should spring is neglected, is not the road to all those peaceful fruits of the spirit to which true Christianity conducts the humble and penitent believer. For, after all we can do, Christian tempers and a Christian spirit are the true criteria of a Christian character, and serve to furnish the most unequivocal test of our attainments in religion. Our doctrines may be sound, but they may not be influential; our actions may be correct, but they may want the sanctifying principle; our frames

and feelings may *seem*, nay they may *be*, devout, but they may be heightened by mere animal fervour; even if genuine, they are seldom lasting; and to many pious persons they are not given: it is, therefore, the Christian *tempers* which most infallibly indicate the sincere Christian, and best prepare him for the heavenly state.

I am aware that a better cast of characters than those we have been contemplating; than even the amiable and the well-disposed, who, while they want courage to resist what they have too much principle to think right, and too much sense to justify, will yet plead for the *palliating* system, and accuse these remarks of unnecessary rigour. They will declare, "that really they are as religious as they can be; they wish they were better; they have little satisfaction in the life they are leading, yet they cannot break with the world; they cannot fly in the face of custom; it does not become individuals like them to oppose the torrent of fashion." Beings so interesting, abounding with engaging qualities; who not only feel the beauty of goodness, but reverence the truths of Christianity, and are awfully looking for a general judgment, we are grieved to hear lament "that they only do as others do," when they are, perhaps, themselves of such rank and importance that if they would begin to do right, others would be brought to do as they did. We are grieved to hear them indolently assert, that "they wish it were otherwise," when they possess the power to *make* it otherwise, by setting an example which

they know would be followed. We are sorry to hear them content themselves with declaring, that "they have not the courage to be singular," when they must feel, by seeing the influence of their example in worse things, that there would be no such great singularity in piety itself, if once *they* became sincerely pious. Besides, this diffidence does not break out on other occasions. They do not blush to be quoted as the opposers of an old mode, or the inventors of a new one: nor are they equally backward in being the first to appear in a strange fashion, such an one as often excites wonder, and sometimes even offends against delicacy. Let not, then, diffidence be pleaded as an excuse only on occasions wherein courage would be virtue.

Will it be thought too harsh a question if we venture to ask these gentle characters who are thus entrenching themselves in the imaginary safety of surrounding multitudes, and who say, "We only do as others do," whether they are willing to run the tremendous risk of consequences, and *to fare as others fare?*

But while these plead the authority of Fashion as a sufficient reason for their conformity to the world, one who has spoken with a paramount authority has positively said, "Be ye *not* conformed to the world." Nay, it is urged as the very badge and distinction by which the character opposite to the Christian is to be marked, "that the friendship of the world is *enmity* with God."

Temptation to conform to the world was never, perhaps, more irresistible than in the days which immediately preceded the Deluge: and no man could ever have pleaded the *fashion* in order to justify a criminal assimilation with the reigning manners, with more propriety than the Patriarch Noah. He had the two grand and contending objects of terror to encounter which we have; the fear of ridicule, and the fear of destruction; the dread of sin, and the dread of singularity. Our cause of alarm is at least equally pressing with his; for it does not appear, even while he was actually obeying the Divine command in providing the means of his future safety, that he *saw* any actual symptoms of the impending ruin. So that in one sense *he* might have truly pleaded as an excuse for slackness of preparation, "that all things continued as they were from the beginning;" while many of us, though the storm is actually begun, never think of providing the refuge; it is true he was "warned of God," and he provided "by faith." But are not we also warned of God? have we not had a fuller revelation? have we not seen Scripture illustrated, prophecy fulfilling, with every awful circumstance that can either quicken the most sluggish remissness, or confirm the feeblest faith?

Besides, the Patriarch's plea for following the fashion was stronger than you can produce. While you must see that many are going wrong, he saw that none were going right. "All flesh had corrupted his way before God;" whilst,

blessed be God! you have still instances enough of piety to keep you in countenance. While you lament that *the world* seduces you (for every one has a little world of his own), your world, perhaps, is only a petty neighbourhood, a few streets and squares; but the Patriarch had really the contagion of a whole united world to resist; he had literally the example of the whole face of the earth to oppose. The "fear of man," also, would, then have been a more pardonable fault, when the lives of the same individuals who were likely to excite respect or fear was prolonged many ages, than it can be in the short period now assigned to human life. How lamentable, then, that human opinion should operate so powerfully, when it is but the breath of a being so frail and so short-lived,

> That he doth cease to be,
> Ere one can say he is!

You who find it so difficult to withstand the individual allurement of one modish acquaintance, would, if you had been in the Patriarch's case, have concluded the struggle to be quite ineffectual, and sunk under the supposed fruitlessness of resistance. "Myself," would you not have said, "or at most my little family of eight persons, can never hope to stop this torrent of corruption; I lament the fruitlessness of opposition; I deplore the necessity of conformity with the prevailing system: but it would be a foolish presumption to hope that *one* family can effect a change in the state of the world?" In your own case, however, it is

not certain to how wide an extent the hearty union of even fewer persons in such a cause might reach: at least, is it nothing to do what the Patriarch did? was it nothing to preserve himself from the general destruction? was it nothing to deliver his own soul? was it nothing to rescue the souls of his whole family?

A wise man will never differ from the world in trifles. It is certainly a mark of a sound judgment to comply with custom whenever we safely can; such compliance strengthens our influence by reserving to ourselves the greater weight of authority on those occasions when our conscience obliges us to differ. Those who are prudent will cheerfully conform to all the innocent usages of the world; but those who are Christians will be scrupulous in defining which are *really* innocent, previous to their conformity to them. Not what the world, but what the Gospel calls innocent will be found at the grand scrutiny to have been really so. A discreet Christian will take due pains to be convinced he is right before he will presume to be singular: but from the instant he is persuaded that the Gospel is true, and the world of course wrong, he will no longer risk his safety by following multitudes, or hazard his soul by staking it on human opinion. All our most dangerous mistakes arise from our not constantly referring our practice to the standard of Scripture, instead of referring it to the mutable standard of human estimation, by which it is impossible to fix the real value of characters; for this latter standard in

some cases determines those to be good who do not run all the lengths in which the notoriously bad allow themselves. The Gospel has an universal, the world has a local, standard of goodness; in certain societies certain vices alone are dishonourable, such as covetousness and cowardice; while those sins of which our Saviour has said, that they which commit them "shall not inherit the kingdom of God," detract nothing from the respect which some persons receive. Nay, those very characters whom the Almighty has expressly and awfully declared "He will judge *," are received, are admired, are caressed, in that which calls itself the best company.

But to weigh our actions by one standard now, when we know they will be judged by another hereafter, would be reckoned the height of absurdity in any transactions but those which involve the interests of eternity. "How readest thou?" is a more specific direction than any comparative view of our own habits with the habits of others; and at the final bar it will be of little avail that our actions have risen above those of bad men, if our views and principles shall be found to have been in opposition to the Gospel of Christ.

Nor is *their* practice more commendable, who are ever on the watch to pick out the worst actions of good men, by way of justifying their own conduct on the comparison. The faults of the best men, "for there is not a just man upon

* Hebrews, xiii. 4.

earth who sinneth not," can in no wise justify the errors of the worst; and it is not, invariably, the example of even good men that we must take for our unerring rule of conduct: nor is it by a single action that either they or we shall be judged; for in that case who could be saved? but it is by the general prevalence of right principles and good habits, and Christian tempers: by the predominance of holiness, and righteousness, and temperance in the life, and by the power of humility, faith, and love in the heart.

CHAP. XX.

ON THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY. — THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE. — THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION. — THE NECESSITY OF A CHANGE OF HEART, AND OF THE DIVINE INFLUENCES TO PRODUCE THAT CHANGE. — WITH A SKETCH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

THE author having in this little work taken a view of the false notions often imbibed in early life from a bad education, and of their pernicious effects; and having attempted to point out the respective remedies to these — she would now draw all that has been said to a point, and declare plainly what she humbly conceives to be the source whence all these false notions and this wrong conduct really proceed: the prophet Jeremiah shall answer: "It is because they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." It is an ignorance past belief of what true Christianity really is: the remedy, therefore, and the only remedy that can be applied with any prospect of success, is RELIGION, and by Religion she would be understood to mean the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It has been before hinted, that religion should be taught at an early period of life; that children should be *brought up* "in the nurture and ad-

monition of the Lord." The *manner* in which they should be taught has likewise with great plainness been suggested; that it should be done in so lively and familiar a manner as to make Religion amiable, and her ways to appear, what they really are, "ways of pleasantness." And a slight sketch has been given of the genius of Christianity, by which her amiableness would more clearly appear. But this, being a subject of such vast importance, compared with which every other subject sinks into nothing; it seems not sufficient to speak on the doctrines and duties of Christianity in *detached* parts, but it is of importance to point out, though in a brief and imperfect manner, the mutual dependence of one doctrine upon another, and the influence which these doctrines have upon the heart and life, so that the *duties* of Christianity may be seen to grow out of its *doctrines:* by which it will appear that Christian virtue differs *essentially* from Pagan: it is of a quite different kind: the plant itself is a different, it springs from a different root, and grows in different soil.

It will be seen how the humbling doctrine of the corruption of human nature, which has followed from the corruption of our first parents, makes way for the bright display of redeeming love. How from the abasing thought that "we are all as sheep going astray, every one in his own way:" that none *can* return to the Shepherd of our souls, "except the Father draw him:" that "the natural man *cannot* receive the things of the Spirit, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned;" — and how from this humiliating view of the *helplessness*, as well as the *corruption*, of human nature, we are to turn to that animating doctrine, the offer of *Divine assistance*. So that, though human nature will appear from this view in a deeply degraded state, and consequently that though *all* have cause for humility, yet not one has cause for despair; the disease, indeed, is dreadful, but a Physician is at hand, both able and willing to save us: though we are naturally without "strength, our help is laid upon one that is mighty." If the Gospel discover to us our lapsed state, it discovers also the means of our restoration to the Divine image and favour. It not only discovers but impresses this image: it not only gives us the description, but the attainment of this favour; and while the word of God suggests the remedy, his Spirit applies it.

We should observe, then, that the doctrines of our Saviour are, if I may so speak, with a beautiful consistency, all woven into one piece. We should get such a view of their reciprocal dependence as to be persuaded that without a deep sense of our own corruptions we can never seriously believe in a Saviour, because the substantial and acceptable belief in Him must always arise from the conviction of our want of Him; that without a firm persuasion that the Holy Spirit can alone restore our fallen nature, repair the ruins of sin, and renew the image of God upon the heart, we never shall be brought to serious humble prayer for repentance and restoration; and that, without

this repentance, there is no salvation: for though Christ has died for us, and consequently to him alone we must look as a Saviour, yet he has himself declared that he will save none but true penitents.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN CORRUPTION.

To come now to a more particular statement of these doctrines. When an important edifice is about to be erected, a wise builder will dig deep, and look well to the foundations, knowing that without this the fabric will not be likely to stand. The foundation of the Christian religion, out of which the whole structure may be said to arise, appears to be the doctrine of the fall of man from his original state of righteousness; and the corruption and helplessness of human nature, which are the consequences of this fall, and which is the natural state of every one born into the world. To this doctrine it is important to conciliate the minds, more especially of young persons, who are peculiarly disposed to turn away from it as a morose, unamiable, and gloomy idea. They are apt to accuse those who are more strict and serious of unnecessary severity, and to suspect them of thinking unjustly ill of mankind. Some of the reasons which prejudice the inexperienced against the doctrine in question appear to be the following: —

Young persons themselves have seen little of the world. In pleasurable society the world puts on its most amiable appearance; and that softness

and urbanity which prevail, particularly amongst persons of fashion, are liable to be mistaken for more than they are really worth. The opposition to this doctrine in the young, arises partly from ingenuousness of heart, partly from a habit of indulging themselves in favourable suppositions respecting the world, rather than of pursuing truth, which is always the grand thing to be pursued; and partly from the popularity of the dangerous tenet, *that every body is so wonderfully good!*

This error in youth has, however, a still deeper foundation, which is, their not having a right standard of moral good and evil themselves, in consequence of their already partaking of the very corruption which is spoken of, and which, in perverting the will, darkens the understanding also; they are therefore apt to have no very strict sense of duty, or of the necessity of a right and religious motive to every act.

Moreover, young people usually do not know themselves. Not having yet been much exposed to temptation, owing to the prudent restraints in which they have been kept, they little suspect to what lengths in vice they themselves are liable to be transported, nor how far others actually are carried, who are set free from those restraints.

Having laid down these as some of the causes of error on this point, I proceed to observe on what strong grounds the doctrine itself stands.

Profane history abundantly confirms this truth; the history of the world being, in fact, little else than the history of the crimes of the human race.

Even though the annals of remote ages lie so involved in obscurity, that some degree of uncertainty attaches itself to many of the events recorded, yet this one melancholy truth is always clear, that most of the miseries which have been brought upon mankind have proceeded from this general depravity.

The world we now live in furnishes abundant proof of this truth. In a world formed on the deceitful theory of those who assert the innocence and dignity of man, almost all the established professions, since they would have been rendered useless by such a state of innocence, would not have existed. Without sin we may nearly presume there would have been no sickness; so that every medical professor is a standing evidence of this sad truth. Sin not only brought sickness but death into the world; consequently every funeral presents a more irrefragable argument than a thousand sermons. Had man persevered in his original integrity, there could have been no litigation, for there would be no contests about property in a world where none would be inclined to attack it. Professors of law, therefore, from the attorney who prosecutes for a trespass, to the pleader who defends a criminal, or the judge who condemns him, loudly confirm the doctrine. Every victory by sea or land should teach us to rejoice with humiliation, for conquest itself brings a terrible, though splendid, attestation to the truth of the fall of man.

Even those who deny the doctrine act universally more or less on the principle. Why do

we all secure our houses with bolts, and bars, and locks? Do we take these steps to defend our lives or property from any *particular* fear? from any suspicion of *this* neighbour, or *that* servant, or the *other* invader? No:—it is from a practical conviction of the common depravity; from a constant, pervading, but undefined dread of impending evil arising from the sense of general corruption. Are not prisons built, are not laws enacted, on the same practical principle?

But, not to descend to the more degraded part of our species. Why in the fairest transaction of business is nothing executed without bonds, receipts, and notes of hand? why does not a perfect confidence in the *dignity of human nature* abolish all these securities; if not between enemies, or people indifferent to each other, yet at least between friends and kindred, and the most honourable connections? why, but because of that universal suspicion between man and man, which, by all we see, and hear, and feel, is become interwoven with our very make? Though we do not entertain any *individual* suspicion, nay, though we have the strongest *personal* confidence, yet the acknowledged principle of conduct has this doctrine for its basis. "I will take a receipt, though it were from my brother," is the established voice of mankind; or, as I have heard it more artfully put, by a fallacy of which the very disguise discovers the principle, "Think every man honest, but deal with him as if you knew him to be otherwise." And as in a state of innocence, the beasts,

it is presumed, would not have bled for the sustenance of man, so their parchments would not have been wanted as instruments of his security against his fellow-man.*

But the grand arguments for this doctrine must be drawn from the Holy Scriptures: and these, besides implying it almost continually, expressly assert it; and that in instances too numerous to be all of them brought forward here. Of these may I be allowed to produce a few? — "God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually:" — "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for *all flesh* had corrupted his way upon the earth. And it *repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved him at his heart.*"† This is a picture of mankind *before* the flood, and the doctrine receives additional confirmation in Scripture, when it speaks of the times which followed after that tremendous judgment had taken place. The Psalms abound in lamentations on the depravity of man. "They are *all* gone aside; there is *none* that doeth good, no not *one.*" — "In *thy* sight," says David, addressing the Most High, "shall *no man living* be

* Bishop Butler distinctly declares this truth to be evident, from experience as well as Revelation, "that this world exhibits an idea of a RUIN;" and *he* will hazard much who ventures to assert that Butler defended Christianity upon principles unconsonant to *reason, philosophy,* or *sound experience.*

† Genesis, vi.

justified." Job, in his usual lofty strain of interrogation, asks, "What is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold the heavens are not clean in *His* sight, how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?" *

Nor do the Scriptures speak of this corruption as arising only from occasional temptation, or from mere extrinsic causes. The wise man tells us, that "foolishness is bound up in the *heart of a child:*" the prophet Jeremiah assures us, "the *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and David plainly states the doctrine: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Can language be more explicit?

The New Testament corroborates the Old. Our Lord's reproof of Peter seems to take the doctrine for granted: "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of *man;*" clearly intimating, that the *ways of man* are opposite to the ways of God. And our Saviour, in that affecting discourse to his disciples, observes to them that, as they were by his grace made *different* from others, therefore they must expect to be hated by those who were so unlike them. And it should be particularly observed, as another proof

* Perhaps one reason why the faults of the most eminent saints are recorded in Scripture, is to add fresh confirmation to this doctrine. If Abraham, Moses, Noah, Elijah, David, and Peter sinned, who, shall we presume to say, has escaped the universal taint?

that the world is wicked, that our Lord considered "*the world*" as opposed to him and to his disciples. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." * St. John, writing to his Christian church, states the same truth: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Man in his natural and unbelieving state is likewise represented as in a state of *guilt*, and under the displeasure of Almighty God. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abideth* on him."

Here, however, if it be objected, that the heathen who never heard of the Gospel will not assuredly be judged by it, the Saviour's answer to such curious enquirers concerning the state of others is, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." It is enough for us to believe that God, who will "judge the world in righteousness," will judge all men according to their opportunities. The heathen, to whom he has not sent the light of the Gospel, will probably not be judged by the Gospel. But with whatever mercy he may judge those who, living in a land of darkness, are without knowledge of his revealed law, *our* business is not with them, but with ourselves. It is *our* business to consider what mercy he will extend to those who, living in a Christian country, abounding with means and ordinances, where the Gospel is preached in its purity; it is *our* business to enquire how he

* John, xv. 19.

will deal with those who shut their eyes to its beams, who close their ears to its truths. For an unbeliever who has passed his life in the meridian of Scripture light, or for an outward but unfruitful professor of Christianity, I know not what hope the Gospel holds out.

The natural state of man is again thus described: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; (awful thought!) for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. So, then, they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." What the apostle means by *being in the flesh* is evident by what follows; for speaking of those whose hearts were changed by Divine grace, he says, "But ye are *not* in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:" that is, you are not now in your natural state: the change that has passed on your minds by the influence of the Spirit of God is so great that your state may properly be called "being in the Spirit." It may be further observed that the same apostle, writing to the churches of Galatia, tells them, that the natural corruption of the human heart is continually opposing the spirit of holiness which influences the regenerate. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other:" which passage, by the way, at the same time that it proves the corruption of the heart, proves the necessity of Divine influences. And the apostle, with respect to himself, freely confesses and deeply laments the workings of this corrupt principle: "O wretched man

that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

It has been objected by some who have opposed this doctrine, that the same Scriptures which speak of mankind as being *sinners*, speak of some as being *righteous*; and hence they would argue, that though this depravity of human nature may be *general*, yet it cannot be *universal*. This objection, when examined, serves only, like all other objections against the truth, to establish that which it was intended to destroy. For what do the Scriptures assert respecting the righteous? That there are some whose principles, views, and conduct, are so different from the rest of the world, and from what theirs themselves once were, that these persons are honoured with the peculiar title of the "sons of God." But no where do the Scriptures assert that even these are *sinless*; on the contrary, their *faults* are frequently mentioned; and persons of this class are, moreover, represented as those on whom a great *change* has passed; as having been formerly "dead in trespasses and sins;" but as "being now *called out* of darkness into light;" as *translated* into the kingdom of God's dear Son;" as "having *passed* from death to life." And St. Paul put this matter past all doubt by expressly asserting, that "*they were all* by nature the children of wrath even as others."

It might be well to ask certain persons, who oppose the doctrine in question, and who also seem to talk as if they thought there were many sinless people in the world, how they expect that

such sinless people will be saved? Though, indeed, to talk of an *innocent* person being *saved* involves a palpable contradiction in terms, of which those who use the expression do not seem to be aware, it is talking of curing a man already in health. "Undoubtedly," such will say, "they will be received into those abodes of bliss prepared for the righteous." But be it remembered, there is but *one way* to these blissful abodes, and that is through Jesus Christ: "For there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." If we ask whom did Christ come to save? the Scripture directly answers, "He came into the world to save *sinners*:" — "His name was called Jesus, because he came to save his people *from their sins*." When St. John was favoured with a heavenly vision, he tells us, that he beheld "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes:" that one of the heavenly inhabitants informed him who they were: "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his Temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living

fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

We may gather from this description what these glorious and happy beings once were: they were *sinful* creatures: their robes were not *spotless*: "They had *washed* them, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They are likewise generally represented as having been once a *suffering* people: they came out of great tribulation. They are described as having overcome the great tempter of mankind, "by the blood of the Lamb*:" as they who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth:" as "redeemed from among men."† And their *employment* in the regions of bliss is a farther confirmation of the doctrine of which we are treating. "The great multitude," &c. we are told, "stood and cried with a loud voice; Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" Here we see they ascribe their salvation to Christ, and, consequently, their present happiness to his atoning blood. And in another of their celestial anthems, they say, in like manner, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."‡

By all this it is evident that men of any other description than *redeemed sinners* must gain admittance to heaven some other way than that which the Scriptures point out; and also that

* Rev. xii. 14. † Rev. xiv. 4.

‡ Rev. v. 9.

when they shall arrive there, so different will be their employment, that they must have an anthem peculiar to themselves.

Nothing is more adapted to "the casting down of high imaginations," and to promote humility, than this reflection, that heaven is always in Scripture pointed out not as the reward of the innocent but as the hope of the penitent. This, while it is calculated to "exclude boasting," the temper the most opposite to the Gospel, is yet the most suited to afford comfort; for were heaven promised as the reward of innocence, who could attain to it? but being, as it is, the promised portion of faith and repentance, purchased for us by the blood of Christ, and offered to every penitent believer, who is compelled to miss it?

It is urged that the belief of this doctrine of our corruption produces many ill effects, and therefore it should be discouraged. That it does *not* produce those ill effects, when not misunderstood or partially represented, we shall attempt to show; at the same time let it be observed, if it be really *true* we must not reject it on account of any of these supposed ill consequences. Truth may often be attended with disagreeable effects, but if it be truth it must still be pursued. If, for instance, treason should exist in a country, every one knows the disagreeable effects which will follow such a conviction; but our *not believing* such treason to exist will not prevent such effect following it: on the contrary, our believing it may prevent the fatal consequences.

It is objected, that this doctrine debases and degrades human nature, and that finding fault with the edifice is only another way of finding fault with the Architect. To the first part of this objection it may be remarked, that if man be really a corrupt fallen being, it is proper to represent him as such: the fault then lies in the *man*, and not in the *doctrine*, which only states the *truth*. As to the inference which is supposed to follow, namely, that it throws the fault upon the Creator, it proceeds upon the false supposition, that man's present corrupt state is the state in which he was originally created; the contrary of which is the truth. "God made man upright, but he hath found out many inventions."

It is likewise objected, that as this doctrine must give us such a bad opinion of mankind, it must consequently produce ill will, hatred, and suspicion. But it should be remembered, that it gives us no worse an opinion of other men than it gives us of ourselves; and such views of ourselves have a very salutary effect, inasmuch as they have a tendency to produce *humility;* and humility is not likely to produce ill will to others, "for only from pride cometh contention:" and as to the views it gives us of mankind, it represents us as *fellow-sufferers;* and surely the consideration that we are *companions in misery* is not calculated to produce hatred. The truth is, these effects, where they have actually followed, have followed from a false and partial view of the subject.

Old persons who have seen much of the world,

and who have little religion, are apt to be strong in their belief of man's actual corruption; but not taking it up on Christian grounds, this belief in them shows itself in a narrow and malignant temper; in uncharitable judgment and harsh opinions, in individual suspicion, and in too general a disposition to hatred.

Suspicion and hatred also are the uses to which Rochefaucault and the other French philosophers have converted this doctrine: their acute minds intuitively found the corruption of man, and they saw it without its concomitant and correcting doctrine: they allowed man to be a depraved creature, but disallowed his high original: they found him in a low state, but did not conceive of him as having fallen from a better. They represent him rather as a brute than an apostate; not taking into the account that his present degraded nature and depraved faculties are not his original state: that he is not such as he came out of the hands of his Creator, but such as he has been made by sin. Nor do they know that he has not even now lost all remains of his primitive dignity, all traces of his divine original, but is still capable of a restoration more glorious

Than is dreamt of in their philosophy.

Perhaps, too, they know from what they *feel*, all the *evil* to which man is inclined; but they do not know, for they have not felt, all the good of which he is capable by the superinduction of the divine principle: thus they asperse human nature instead

of representing it fairly, and in so doing it is *they* who calumniate the great Creator.

The doctrine of corruption is likewise accused of being a gloomy, discouraging doctrine, and an enemy to joy and comfort. Now suppose this objection true in its fullest extent. Is it any way unreasonable that a being fallen into a state of sin, under the displeasure of Almighty God, should feel *seriously alarmed* at being in such a state? Is the condemned criminal blamed because he is not *merry?* And would it be esteemed a kind action to persuade him that he is *not* condemned in order to make him so?

But this charge is *not* true in the sense intended by those who bring it forward. Those who believe this doctrine are *not* the most gloomy people. When, indeed, any one by the influence of the Holy Spirit is brought to view his state as it really is, a state of guilt and danger, it is natural that *fear* should be excited in his mind, but it is such a fear as impels him "to flee from the wrath to come:" it is such a fear as moved Noah to "prepare an ark to the saving of his house." Such a one will likewise feel *sorrow;* not, however, "the sorrow of the world which worketh death," but that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. Such a one is said to be driven to *despair* by this doctrine; but it is the despair of his own ability to save himself: it is that wholesome despair of his own merits produced by conviction and humility which drives him to seek a better refuge; and such a one is in a proper state to receive the

glorious doctrine we are next about to contemplate; namely,

THAT GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVED ON HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

Of this doctrine it is of the last importance to form just views; for, as it is the only doctrine which can keep the humble penitent from despair, so, on the other hand, great care must be taken that false views of it do not lead us to presumption. In order to understand it rightly, we must not fill our minds with our own reasonings upon it, which is the way in which some good people have been misled, but we must betake ourselves to the Scriptures, wherein we shall find the doctrine stated so plainly as to show that the mistakes have not arisen from a want of clearness in the Scriptures, but from a desire to make it bend to some favourite notions. While it has been totally rejected by some, it has been so mutilated by others, as hardly to retain any resemblance to the Scripture doctrine of redemption. We are told, in the beautiful passage last quoted, *its source* — the love of God to a lost world; — *who* the Redeemer was — the Son of God; — the *end* for which this plan was formed and executed — "that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."— "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."—"He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the know-

ledge of the truth." — "He would not have any perish, but that all should come to repentance." There is nothing surely in all this to promote gloominess. On the contrary, if kindness and mercy have a tendency to win and warm the heart, here is every incentive to joy and cheerfulness. Christianity looks kindly towards all, and with peculiar tenderness on such as, from humbling views of their own unworthiness, might be led to fancy themselves excluded: —we are expressly told that "Christ died for *all;*" — that "he tasted death for *every* man;" — that "he died for the sins of the *whole world.*" Accordingly, he has commanded that his Gospel should be "preached to *every creature;*" which is in effect declaring, that not a single human being is excluded; for to preach the Gospel is to offer a Saviour: and the Saviour, in the plainest language, offers himself to all, — declaring to "all the ends of the earth," — "Look unto me and be saved." It is, therefore, an undeniable truth, that no one will perish for *want* of a Saviour, but for *rejecting* him. That none are excluded who do not exclude themselves, as many unhappily do, who "reject the counsel of God against themselves, and so receive the grace of God in vain."

But to suppose that because Christ has *died* for the "sins of the whole world," the whole world will therefore be *saved*, is a most fatal mistake. In the same book which tells us that "Christ died for all," we have likewise this awful admonition, "Strait is the gate, and *few* there be that find it;"

which, whether it be understood of the immediate reception of the Gospel, or of the final use which was too likely to be made of it, gives no encouragement to hope that *all* will be qualified to partake of its promises. And whilst it declares that "there is no other name whereby we may be saved but the name of Jesus," it likewise declares,

THAT "WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD."

It is much to be feared that some, in their zeal to defend the Gospel doctrines of free grace, have materially injured the Gospel doctrine of holiness: stating, that Christ has done all in such a sense, as that there is nothing left for us to do. But do the Scriptures hold out this language? — "Come, for all things are ready," is the Gospel call; in which we may observe, that, at the same time that it tells us that "all things are ready," it nevertheless tells us that we must "*come*." Food being *provided* for us will not benefit us except we *partake* of it. It will not avail us that "Christ our passover is *sacrificed* for us," unless "we *keep* the feast." We must *make use* of "the fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness," if we would be *purified*. "All, indeed, who are *athirst* are invited to take of the waters of life freely;" but if we feel no "*thirst*," if we do not *drink*, their saving qualities are of no avail.

It is the more necessary to insist on this in the present day, as there is a worldly and fashionable, as well as a low and sectarian Antinomianism:

there lamentably prevails in the world an unwarranted assurance of salvation, founded on a slight, vague, and general confidence in what Christ has done and suffered for us, as if the great object of his doing and suffering had been to emancipate *us* from all obligations to duty and obedience; and as if, because he died for sinners, we might therefore safely and comfortably go on to live in sin, contenting ourselves with now and then a transient, formal, and unmeaning avowal of our unworthiness, our obligation, and the all-sufficiency of *his* atonement. By the discharge of this quit-rent, of which all the cost consists in the acknowledgment, the sensual, the worldly, and the vain hope to find a refuge in heaven, when driven from the enjoyments of this world. But this cheap and indolent Christianity is no where taught in the Bible. The faith inculcated *there* is not a lazy, professional faith, but that faith which "produceth *obedience*," that faith which "worketh by love," that faith of which the practical language is, "*Strive* that you may enter in;" — "So *run* that you may obtain;" —"So *fight* that you may lay hold on eternal life:" — that faith which directs us "not to be weary in well doing;" — which says, "*Work* out your own salvation:" — never forgetting, at the same time, "that it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do." The contrary doctrine is implied in the very name of the Redeemer: "And his name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people *from* their sins," not *in* their sins. Are those rich supplies of grace which the Gospel

offers, are those abundant aids of the Spirit which it promises, tendered to the *slothful?* No. God will have all his gifts improved. Grace must be used, or it will be withdrawn. The Almighty thinks it not derogatory to his free grace to declare, that "those only who do his commandments have right to the tree of life." And the Scriptures represent it as not derogatory to the *sacrifice* of Christ, to follow his example in well-doing. The only caution is, that we must not work in our own strength, nor bring in our contribution of works as if in aid of the supposed deficiency of His merits.

For we must not, in our *over-caution*, fancy, that, because Christ has "redeemed us from the curse of the law," we are therefore without a law. In acknowledging Christ as a deliverer, we must not forget that he is a lawgiver too, and that we are expressly commanded "to fulfil the law of Christ." If we wish to know what his laws are, we must "search the Scriptures," especially the New Testament: there we shall find him declaring

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF A CHANGE OF HEART AND LIFE:

Our Saviour says, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" that it is not a mere acknowledging His authority, calling him "Lord, Lord," that will avail any thing, except we DO what He commands; that any thing short of this is like a man building his house upon the sands, which, when the storms come on, will certainly fall. In like manner the apostles are

continually enforcing the necessity of this change, which they describe under the various names of "the new man *;" — "the new creature †;" — "a transformation into the image of God ‡;" — "a participation of the Divine nature." § Nor is this change represented as consisting merely in a change of religious opinions; nor even in being delivered over from a worse to a better system of doctrines; nor in exchanging gross sins for those which are more sober and reputable; nor in renouncing the sins of youth, and assuming those of a quieter period of life; nor in leaving off evil practices because men are grown tired of them, or find they injure their credit, health, or fortune; nor does it consist in inoffensiveness and obliging manners, nor, indeed, in any merely *outward* reformation.

But the change consists in "being renewed in the spirit of our minds;" in being "conformed to the image of the Son of God;" in being "called out of darkness into His marvellous light." And the whole of this great change, its beginning, progress, and final accomplishment, for it is represented as a *gradual* change, is ascribed to

THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We are perpetually reminded of our utter inability to help ourselves, that we may set the higher value on those gracious aids which are held out to us. We are taught that "we are not sufficient to

* Ephesians, iv. 24. † Galatians, vi. 15.
‡ 2 Corinthians, xii. § 2 Peter, i. 4.

think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." And when we are told, that "if we live after the flesh, we shall die," we are at the same time reminded, that it is "through the *Spirit* that we must mortify the deeds of the body." We are likewise cautioned that we "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;"— "that we quench not the Spirit." By all which expressions, and many others of like import, we are taught, that, while we are to ascribe with humble gratitude every good thought, word, and work, to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we are not to look on such influences as superseding our own exertions; and it is too plain that we *may* reject the gracious offers of assistance, since otherwise there would be no occasion to caution us *not* to do it. The Scriptures have illustrated this in terms which are familiar indeed, but which are therefore only the more condescending and endearing. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Observe, it is not said, If any man will not listen to me, I will force open the door. But if we refuse admittance to such a guest, we must abide by the consequences.

The sublime doctrine of Divine assistance is the more to be prized, not only on account of our own helplessness, but from the additional consideration of the powerful adversary with whom the Christian has to contend: an article of our faith, by the way, which is growing into general disrepute among the politer classes of society. Nay, there is a kind of

ridicule attached to the very suggestion of the subject, as if it were exploded by general agreement, on full proof of its being an absolute absurdity, utterly repugnant to the liberal spirit of an enlightened age. And it requires no small neatness of expression and periphrastic ingenuity to get the the very mention tolerated: — I mean

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE EXISTENCE AND POWER OF OUR GREAT SPIRITUAL ENEMY.

This is considered by the fashionable sceptic as a vulgar invention, which ought to be banished with the belief in dreams, and ghosts, and witchcraft: by the fashionable Christian, as an ingenious allegory, but not as a literal truth; and by almost all as a doctrine which, when it happens to be introduced at church, has at least nothing to do with the *pews*, but is by common consent made over to the *aisles*, if, indeed, it must be retained at all.

May we, with great humility and respect, presume to suggest to our divines that they would do well not to lend their countenance to these modish curtailments of the Christian faith; nor to shun the introduction of this doctrine whenever it consists with their subject to bring it forward. A truth which is seldom brought before the eye imperceptibly grows less and less important; and, if it be an unpleasing truth, we grow more and more reconciled to its absence, till at length its intrusion becomes offensive, and we learn in the end to renounce what we at first only neglected. Because some coarse and ranting enthusiasts have been

fond of using tremendous terms and awful denunciations with a violence and frequency which might make it seem to be a gratification to them to denounce judgments and anticipate torments, can *their* coarseness or vulgarity make a true doctrine false, or an important one trifling? If such preachers have given offence by their uncouth manner of managing an awful doctrine, that, indeed, furnishes a caution to treat the subject more discreetly, but it is no just reason for avoiding the doctrine. For to keep a truth out of sight because it has been absurdly handled or ill defended, might, in time, be assigned as a reason for keeping back, one by one, every doctrine of our holy church; for which of them has not occasionally had imprudent advocates or weak champions?

Be it remembered, that the doctrine in question is not only interwoven by allusion, implication, assumption, or direct assertion throughout the whole Scripture, but that it stands prominently *personified* at the opening of the New as well as the Old Testament. The devil's temptation of our Lord, in which he is not represented figuratively, but visibly and palpably, stands exactly on the same ground of authority with other events which are received without repugnance. And it may not be an unuseful observation to remark, that the very refusing to believe in an evil spirit may be considered as one of his own suggestions; for there is not a more dangerous illusion than to believe ourselves out of the reach of illusions, nor a more alarming tempt-

ation than to fancy that we are not liable to be tempted.

But the dark cloud raised by this doctrine will be dispelled by the cheering certainty that our blessed Saviour having himself "been tempted like as we are, is able to deliver those who are tempted."

To return. From this imperfect sketch we may see how suitable the religion of Christ is to fallen man! How exactly it meets every want! No one needs now perish because he is a sinner, provided he be willing to forsake his sins; for "Jesus Christ came into the world to *save* sinners;" and "He is now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." Which passage, be it observed, may be considered as pointing out to us the *order* in which he bestows his blessings; he gives first *repentance*, and then *forgiveness*.

We may likewise see how much the character of a true Christian rises above every other; that there is a wholeness, an integrity, a completeness in the Christian character; that a few natural, pleasing qualities, not cast in the mould of the Gospel, are but as beautiful fragments, or well-turned single limbs, which, for want of that beauty which arises from the proportion of parts, for want of that connection of the members with the living head, are of little comparative excellence. There may be amiable qualities which are not Christian graces; and the apostle, after enumerating every separate article of attack or defence with which a

Christian warrior is to be accoutred, sums up the matter by directing that we put on "the *whole* armour of God." And this *completeness* is insisted on by all the apostles. One prays that his converts may "stand *perfect* and *complete* in the whole will of God;" another enjoins that they be "*perfect* and *entire*, wanting nothing."

Now, we are not to suppose that they expected any convert to be *without faults*: they knew too well the constitution of the human heart to form so unfounded an expectation. But Christians must have no fault in their *principle*; their *views* must be direct; their proposed *scheme* must be faultless; their *intention* must be single; their *standard* must be lofty; their *object* must be right; their "*mark* must be the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There must be no *allowed* evil, no *warranted* defection, no *tolerated* impurity, no *habitual* irregularity. Though they do not rise as high as they ought, nor as they wish, in the scale of perfection, yet the scale itself must be correct, and the desire of ascending perpetual; counting nothing done while any thing remains undone. Every grace must be kept in exercise; conquests once made over an evil propensity must not only be maintained but extended; and, in truth, Christianity so comprises contrary, and, as it may be thought, irreconcilable excellences, that those which seem so incompatible as to be incapable by nature of being inmates of the same breast are almost necessarily involved in the Christian character.

For instance: Christianity requires that our

faith be at once fervent and sober; that our love be both ardent and lasting; that our patience be not only heroic but gentle: she demands dauntless zeal and genuine humility; active services and complete self-renunciation; high attainments in goodness, with deep consciousness of defect; courage in reproving, and meekness in bearing reproof; a quick perception of what is sinful, with a willingness to forgive the offender; active virtue ready to *do* all, and passive virtue ready to *bear* all. We must stretch every faculty in the service of our Lord, and yet bring every thought into obedience to him. While we aim to live in the exercise of every Christian grace, we must account ourselves unprofitable servants: we must *strive* for the crown, yet receive it as a *gift*, and then lay it at our Master's feet. While we are busily trading in the world with our Lord's talents, we must "commune with our heart, and be still:" while we strive to practise the purest disinterestedness, we must be contented, though we meet with selfishness in return; and, while laying out our lives for the good of mankind, we must submit to reproach without murmuring, and to ingratitude without resentment. And to render us equal to all these services, Christianity bestows not only the precept but the power; she does what the great poet of ethics lamented that Reason could not do, "she lends us arms as well as rules."

For here, if not only the worldly and the timid, but the humble and the well-disposed, should demand with fear and trembling, "Who is sufficient

for these things?" Revelation makes its own reviving answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

It will be well here to distinguish that there are two sorts of Christian professors; one of which affect to speak of Christianity as if it were a mere system of doctrines, with little reference to their influence on life and manners; while the other consider it as exhibiting a scheme of human duties, independent on its doctrines; for though the latter sort may admit the doctrines, yet they contemplate them as a separate and disconnected set of opinions, rather than as an influential principle of action. In violation of that beautiful harmony which subsists in every part of Scripture between practice and belief, the religious world furnishes two sorts of people, who seem to enlist themselves, as if in opposition, under the banners of St. Paul and St. James; as if those two great champions of the Christian cause had fought for two masters. Those who affect respectively to be the disciples of each treat faith and works as if they were opposite interests, instead of inseparable points; nay, they go farther, and set St. Paul at variance with himself.

Now, instead of reasoning on the point, let us refer to the apostle in question, who himself definitively settles the dispute. The apostolical order and method in this respect deserve notice and imitation; for it is observable that the earlier parts of most of the epistles abound in the *doctrines* of Christianity, while those latter chapters, which wind up the subject, exhibit all the *duties* which

grow out of them, as the natural and necessary productions of such a living root. * But this alternate mention of doctrine and practice, which seemed likely to *unite*, has, on the contrary, formed a sort of line of separation between these two orders of believers, and introduced a broken and mutilated system. Those who would make Christianity consist of doctrines only, dwell, for instance, on the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, as containing exclusively the sum and substance of the Gospel; while the mere moralists, who wish to strip Christianity of her lofty and appropriate attributes, delight to dwell on the *twelfth* chapter, which is a table of duties, as exclusively as if the preceding chapters made no part of the sacred canon. But St. Paul himself, who was at least as sound a theologian as any of his commentators, settles the matter another way, by making the duties of the twelfth grow out of the doctrines of the antecedent *eleven*, just as any other consequence grows out of its cause; and, as if he suspected that the indivisible union between them might possibly be overlooked, he links the two distinct divisions together by a logical "therefore," with which the twelfth begins: — "I beseech you, *therefore*," (that is, as the effect of all I have been inculcating,) "that you present

* This is the language of our church, as may be seen in her 12th article; *viz.*

"Good works do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by its fruit."

your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God," &c.; and then goes on to enforce on them, as a consequence of what he had been preaching, the the practice of every Christian virtue. This combined view of the subject seems, on the one hand, to be the only means of preventing the substitution of pagan morality for Christian holiness; and, on the other, of securing the leading doctrine of justification by faith, from the dreadful danger of Antinomian licentiousness; every human obligation being thus grafted on the living stock of a Divine principle.

CHAP. XXI.

ON THE DUTY AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

It is not proposed to enter largely on a topic which has been exhausted by the ablest pens. But as a work of this nature seems to require that so important a subject should not be overlooked, it is intended to notice in a slight manner a few of those many difficulties and popular objections which are brought forward against the use and efficacy of prayer, even by those who would be unwilling to be suspected of impiety and unbelief.

There is a class of objectors who strangely profess to withhold homage from the Most High, not out of contempt, but reverence. They affect to consider the use of prayer as derogatory from the omniscience of God, asserting that it looks as if we thought he stood in need of being informed of our wants; and as derogatory from his goodness, as implying that he needs to be put in mind of them.

But is it not enough for such poor frail beings as we are to know, that God himself does not consider prayer as derogatory either to his wisdom or goodness? And shall *we* erect ourselves into judges of what is consistent with the attributes of Him before whom angels fall prostrate with self-abasement? Will he thank such defenders of his attributes, who, while they profess to reverence, scruple

not to disobey him? It ought rather to be viewed as a great encouragement to prayer, that we are addressing a Being, who knows our wants better than we can express them, and whose preventing goodness is always ready to relieve them. Prayer seems to unite the different attributes of the Almighty; for if he is indeed the God that heareth prayer, that is the best reason why "to Him all flesh should come."

It is objected by another class, and on the specious ground of humility too, though we do not always find the objector himself quite as humble as his plea would be thought, that it is arrogant in such insignificant beings as we are to presume to lay our petty necessities before the Great and Glorious God, who cannot be expected to condescend to the multitude of trifling and even interfering requests which are brought before him by his creatures. These and such like objections arise from mean and unworthy thoughts of the Great Creator. It seems as if those who make them considered the Most High as "such a one as themselves;" a Being, who can perform a certain given quantity of business, but who would be overpowered with an additional quantity. Or, at best, is it not considering the Almighty in the light, not of an infinite God, but of a great man, of a minister, or a king, who, while he superintends public and national concerns is obliged to neglect small and individual petitions, because his hands being full, he cannot spare that leisure and attention which suffice for every thing? They do not

consider him as that infinitely glorious Being, who, while he beholds at once all that is doing in heaven and in earth, is at the same time as attentive to the prayer of the poor destitute as present to the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner, as if each of these forlorn creatures were individually the object of his undivided attention.

These critics, who are for sparing the Supreme Being the trouble of our prayers, and, if I may so speak without profaneness, would relieve Omnipotence of part of his burden, by assigning to his care only such a portion as may be more easily managed, seem to have no adequate conception of his attributes.

They forget that infinite wisdom puts him as easily within reach of all knowledge, as infinite power does of all performance; that he is a Being in whose plans complexity makes no difficulty, variety no obstruction, and multiplicity no confusion; that to ubiquity distance does not exist; that to infinity space is annihilated; that past, present, and future, are discerned more accurately at one glance of His eye, to whom a thousand years are as one day, than a single moment of time or a single point of space can be by ours.

To the other part of the objection, founded on the supposed interference (that is, irreconcileableness) of one man's petitions with those of another, this answer seems to suggest itself; first, that we must take care that when we ask, we do not "ask amiss;" that, for instance, we ask chiefly, and in an unqualified manner, only for spiritual blessings to

ourselves and others; and in doing this the prayer of one man *cannot* interefere with that of another, because no proportion of sanctity or virtue implored by one obstructs the same attainments in another. Next, in asking for temporal and inferior blessings, we must *qualify* our petition, even though it should extend to deliverance from the severest pains, or to our very life itself, according to that example of our Saviour: "Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me. *Nevertheless, not my will*, but thine be done." By thus qualifying our prayer, we exercise ourselves in an act of resignation to God; we profess not to wish what will interfere with his benevolent plan, and yet we may hope by prayer to secure the blessing so far as it is consistent with it. Perhaps, the reason why this objection to prayer is so strongly felt, is the too great disposition to pray for merely temporal and worldly blessings, and to desire them in the most unqualified manner, not submitting to be without them, even though the granting them should be inconsistent with the general plan of Providence.

Another class continue to bring forward, as pertinaciously as if it had never been answered, the exhausted argument, that seeing God is immutable, no petitions of ours can ever change Him: that events themselves being settled in a fixed and unalterable course, and bound in a fatal necessity, it is folly to think that we can disturb the established laws of the universe, or interrupt the course of Providence by our prayers; and that

it is absurd to suppose these firm decrees can be reversed by any requests of ours.

Without entering into the wide and trackless field of fate and free will, from which pursuit I am kept back equally by the most profound ignorance and the most invincible dislike, I would only observe that these objections apply equally to all human actions as well as to prayer. It may, therefore, with the same propriety be urged, that seeing God is immutable and his decrees unalterable, therefore our *actions* can produce no change in Him, or in our own state. Weak as well as impious reasoning! It may be questioned whether even the modern French and German philosophers might not be prevailed upon to acknowledge the existence of God, if they might make such a use of his attributes. The truth is, and it is a truth discoverable without any depth of learning, all these objections are the offspring of *pride*. Poor, short-sighted man, cannot reconcile the omniscience and decrees of God with the efficacy of prayer; and because *he* cannot reconcile them, he modestly concludes they are irreconcilable. How much more wisdom as well as happiness results from an humble Christian spirit! Such a plain practical text as "Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you," carries more consolation, more true knowledge of his wants and their remedy to the heart of a penitent sinner, than all the "tomes of casuistry" which have puzzled the world ever since the question was first set afloat by its original propounders.

And as the plain man only got up and walked, to prove there was such a thing as motion, in answer to the philosopher who, in an elaborate theory, denied it; so the plain Christian, when he is borne down with the assurance that there is no efficacy in prayer, requires no better argument to repel the assertion than the good he finds in prayer itself.

All the doubts proposed to him respecting God do not so much affect him as this one doubt respecting himself: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." For the chief doubt and difficulty of a real Christian consists, not so much in a distrust of God's ability and willingness to answer the prayer of the upright as in a distrust of his own uprightness, as in a doubt whether he himself belongs to that description of persons to whom the promises are made, and of the quality of the prayer which he offers up.

Let the subjects of a dark fate maintain a sullen, or the slaves of a blind chance a hopeless, silence, but let the child of a compassionate Almighty Father supplicate His mercies with an humble confidence, inspired by the assurance, that "the very hairs of his head are numbered." Let him take comfort in that individual and minute attention, without which not a sparrow falls to the ground, as well as in that heart-cheering promise, that as "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous," so are "his ears open to their prayers." And as a pious bishop has observed, "Our Sa-

viour has as it were hedged in and inclosed the Lord's prayer with these two great fences of our faith, God's *willingness* and his *power* to help us:" the preface to it assures us of the one, which by calling God by the tender name of "Our Father," intimates his *readiness* to help his children; and the animating conclusion, "Thine is the *power*," rescues us from every unbelieving doubt of his *ability* to help us.

A Christian knows, because he feels, that prayer is, though in a way to him inscrutable, the medium of connection between God and his rational creatures; the means appointed by him to draw down his blessings upon us. The Christian knows that prayer is the appointed means of uniting two ideas, one of the highest magnificence, the other of the most profound lowliness, within the compass of imagination; namely, that it is the link of communication between "the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," and that heart of the "contrite in which he delights to dwell." He knows that this inexplicable union between beings so unspeakably, so essentially different, can only be maintained by prayer; that this is the strong but secret chain which unites time with eternity, earth with heaven, man with God.

The plain Christian, as was before observed, cannot explain why it is so; but while he *feels* the efficacy, he is contented to let the learned *define* it; and he will no more postpone prayer till he can produce a chain of reasoning on the manner in which he derives benefit from it, than he will post-

pone eating till he can give a scientific lecture on the nature of digestion: he is contented with knowing that his meat has nourished him; and he leaves to the philosopher, who may choose to defer his meal till he has elaborated his treatise, to starve in the interim. The Christian feels better than he is able to explain, that the functions of his spiritual life can no more be carried on without habitual prayer than those of his natural life without frequent bodily nourishment. He feels renovation and strength grow out of the use of the appointed means, as necessarily in the one case as in the other. He feels that the health of his soul can no more be sustained, and its powers kept in continued vigour by the *prayers* of a distant day, than his body by the *aliment* of a distant day.

But there is one motive to the duty in question, far more constraining to the true believer than all others that can be named; more imperious than any argument on its utility, than any convictions of its efficacy, even than any experience of its consolations. *Prayer is the command of God;* the plain, positive, repeated injunction of the Most High, who declares, "He will be enquired of." This is enough to secure the obedience of the Christian, even though a promise were not, as it always is, attached to the command. But in this case, to our unspeakable comfort, the promise is as clear as the precept: "*Ask*, and ye shall *receive*:—*Seek*, and ye shall *find*:—Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This is encourage-

ment enough for the plain Christian. As to the *manner* in which prayer is made to coincide with the general scheme of God's plan in the government of human affairs; how God has left himself at liberty to reconcile our prayer with his own predetermined will, the Christian does not very critically examine, his precise and immediate duty being to pray, and not to examine; and probably this being among the "secret things which belong to God," and not to us, it will lie hidden among those numberless mysteries which we shall not fully understand till faith be lost in sight.

In the mean time, it is enough for the humble believer to be assured, that the Judge of all the earth is doing right: it is enough for him to be assured in that word of God, "which cannot lie," of numberless actual instances of the efficacy of prayer in obtaining blessings and averting calamities, both national and individual: it is enough for him to be convinced experimentally, by that internal evidence which is perhaps paramount to all other evidence, the comfort he himself has received from prayer when all other comforts have failed; — and, above all, to end with the same motive with which we began, the only motive, indeed, which *he* requires for the performance of any duty, — it is motive enough for him, — that *thus saith the Lord.* For when a serious Christian has once got a plain unequivocal command from his Maker on any point, he never suspends his obedience while he is amusing himself with looking about for subordinate motives of action. Instead

of curiously analysing the nature of the duty, he considers how he shall best fulfil it: for on these points at least it may be said without controversy, that "the ignorant (and here who is *not* ignorant?) *have nothing to do with the law but to obey it.*"

Others there are, who, perhaps, not controverting any of these premises, yet neglect to build practical consequences on the admission of them; who neither denying the duty nor the efficacy of prayer, yet go on to live either in the irregular observance or the total neglect of it, as appetite, or pleasure, or business, or humour, may happen to predominate; and who by living almost without prayer, may be said "to live almost without God in the world." To such we can only say, that they little know what they lose. The time is hastening on when they will look upon those blessings as invaluable, which now they think not worth asking for; when they will bitterly regret the absence of those means and opportunities which now they either neglect or despise. "O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!"

There are, again, others, who, it is to be feared, having once lived in the habit of prayer, yet not having been well grounded in those principles of faith and repentance on which genuine prayer is built, have by degrees totally discontinued it. "They do not find," say they, "that their affairs prosper the better or the worse; or, perhaps, they were unsuccessful in their affairs even before they dropt the practice, and so had no encouragement

to go on." They do not *know* that they had no encouragement; they do not *know* how much worse their affairs might have gone on, had they discontinued it sooner, or how their prayers helped to retard their ruin. Or they do not *know* that perhaps "they asked amiss," or that, if they had obtained what they asked, they might have been far more unhappy. For a true believer never "restrains prayer," because he is not certain that he obtains every individual request; for he is persuaded that God, in compassion to our ignorance, sometimes in great mercy, withholds what we desire, and often disappoints his most favoured children by giving them, not what they ask, but what he knows is really good for them. The froward child, as a pious prelate * observes, cries for the shining blade, which the tender parent withholds, knowing it would cut his fingers.

Thus to persevere when we have not the encouragement of visible success, is an evidence of tried faith. Of this holy perseverance Job was a noble instance. Defeat and disappointment rather stimulated than stopped *his* prayers. Though in a vehement strain of passionate eloquence he exclaims, "I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment:" yet so persuaded was he, notwithstanding of the duty of continuing this holy importunity, that he persisted against all human hope, till he attained to that exalted pitch of unshaken faith, by which he was enabled to break out into that sublime apos-

* Bishop Hall.

trophe, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him!"

But may we not say that there is a considerable class, who not only bring none of the objections which we have stated against the use of prayer; who are so far from rejecting, that they are exact and regular in the performance of it; who yet take it up on as low ground as is consistent with their ideas of their own safety; who, while they consider prayer as an indispensable form, believe nothing of that change of heart and of those holy tempers which it is intended to produce? Many who yet adhere scrupulously to the letter, are so far from entering into the spirit of this duty, that they are strongly inclined to suspect those of hypocrisy who adopt the true scriptural views of prayer. Nay, as even the Bible may be so wrested as to be made to speak almost any language in support of almost any opinion, these persons lay hold on Scripture itself to bear them out in their own slight views of this duty; and they profess to borrow from thence the ground of that censure which they cast on the more serious Christians. Among the many passages which have been made to convey a meaning foreign to their original designs, none have been seized upon with more avidity by such persons than the pointed censures of our Saviour on those "who for a pretence make long prayers;" as well as on those "who use vain repetitions, and think they shall be heard for much speaking." Now the things here intended to be reproved were the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and

the ignorance of the heathen, together with the error of all those who depended on the success of their prayers, while they imitated the deceit of the one or the folly of the other. But our Saviour never meant that those severe reprehensions should cool or abridge the devotion of pious Christians, to which they do not at all apply.

More or fewer words, however, so little constitute the true value of prayer, that there is no doubt but one of the most affecting specimens on record is the short petition of the Publican; full fraught as it is with that spirit of contrition and self-abasement which is the very principle and soul of prayer. And this specimen, perhaps, is the best model for that sudden lifting up of the heart which we call ejaculation. But I doubt, in general, whether those few hasty words to which these frugal petitioners would stint the scanty devotions of others and themselves will be always found ample enough to satisfy the humble penitent, who, being a sinner, has much to confess; who, hoping he is a pardoned sinner, has much to acknowledge. Such a one, perhaps, cannot always pour out the fulness of his soul within the prescribed abridgments. Even the sincerest Christian, when he wishes to find his heart warm, has often to lament its coldness. Though he feel that he has received much, and has, therefore, much to be thankful for, yet he is not able at once to bring his wayward spirit into such a posture as shall fit it for the solemn business; for such a one has not merely his form to repeat, but he has his tempers to reduce to order, his

affections to excite, and his peace to make. His thoughts may be realizing the sarcasm of the prophet on the idol Baal, "they may be gone a journey," and must be recalled; his heart perhaps "sleepeth, and must be awaked." A devout supplicant too will labour to affect and warm his mind with a sense of the great and gracious attributes of God, in imitation of the holy men of old. Like Jehoshaphat, he will sometimes enumerate "the power, and the might, and the mercies of the Most High," in order to stir up the sentiments of awe, and gratitude, and love, and humility in his own soul.* He will labour to imitate the example of his Saviour, whose heart dilated with the expression of the same holy affections. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!" A heart thus animated, thus warmed with Divine love, cannot always scrupulously limit itself to the mere *business* of prayer, I may so speak. It cannot content itself with merely spreading out its own necessities, but expands in contemplating the perfections of Him to whom he is addressing them. The humble supplicant, though he be no longer *governed* by a love of the world, yet grieves to find that he cannot totally exclude it from his thoughts. Though he has on the whole a deep sense of his own wants, and of the abundant provision which is made for them in the Gospel; yet when he most wishes to be rejoicing in those strong motives for love and gratitude, alas! even then he has to mourn his

* 2 Chron. xx. 5, 6.

worldliness, his insensibility, his deadness. He has to deplore the littleness and vanity of the objects which are even then drawing away his heart from his Redeemer. The best Christian is but too liable, during the temptations of the day, to be ensnared by "the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," and is not always brought without effort to reflect that he is but dust and ashes. How can even good persons, who are just come, perhaps, from listening to the flattery of their fellow-worms, acknowledge before God, without any preparation of the heart, that they are miserable sinners? They require a little time, to impress on their own souls the truth of that solemn confession of sin which they are making to Him, without which brevity and not length might constitute hypocrisy. Even the sincerely pious have in prayer grievous wanderings to lament, from which others mistakingly suppose the advanced Christian to be exempt. Such wanderings that, as an old divine has observed, it would exceedingly humble a good man, could he, after he had prayed, be made to see his prayers written down, with exact interlineations of all the vain and impertinent thoughts which had thrust themselves in amongst them. So that such a one will indeed, from a strong sense of these distractions, feel deep occasion with the prophet to ask forgiveness for "the iniquity of his *holy* things:" and would find cause enough for humiliation every night, had he to lament the sins of his prayers only.

We know that such a brief petition as "Lord, help my unbelief," if the supplicant be in so happy a frame, and the prayer be darted up with such strong faith that his very soul mounts with the petition, may suffice to draw down a blessing which may be withheld from the more prolix petitioner: yet if by prayer we do not mean a mere form of words, whether they be long or short; if the true definition of prayer be, that it is *the desire of the heart;* if it be that secret communion between God and the soul which is the very breath and being of religion; then is the Scripture so far from suggesting that short measure of which it is accused, that it expressly says, "Pray without ceasing:" — "Pray evermore:" — "I will that men pray every where:" — "Continue instant in prayer."

If such "repetitions" as these objectors reprobate, stir up desires as yet unawakened, or protract affections already excited (for "*vain* repetitions" are such as awaken or express no new desire, and serve no religious purpose); then are "repetitions" not to be condemned. And that our Saviour did not give the warning against "long prayers and repetitions," in the sense these objectors allege, is evident from his own practice; for once, we are told, "he continued *all night* in prayer to God." And again, in a most awful crisis of his life, it is expressly said, "He prayed the *third* time, using *the same words.*" *

* Matt. xxvi. 44.

All habits gain by exercise; of course the Christian graces gain force and vigour by being called out, and, as it were, mustered in prayer. Love, faith, and trust in the divine promises, if they were not kept alive by this stated intercourse with God, would wither and die. Prayer is also one great source and chief encourager of holiness. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Prayer possesses the twofold property of fitting and preparing the heart to receive the blessings we pray for, in case we should obtain them; and of fortifying and disposing it to submit to the will of God, in case it should be his pleasure to withhold them.

A sense of sin should be so far from keeping us from prayer, through a false plea of unworthiness, that the humility growing on this very consciousness is the truest and strongest incentive to prayer. There is, for our example and encouragement, a beautiful union of faith and humility in the prodigal, — "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." This, as it might seem to imply hopelessness of pardon, might be supposed to promote unwillingness to ask it; but the broken-hearted penitent drew the direct contrary conclusion, — "I will arise, and go to my father!"

Prayer, to make it accepted, requires neither genius, eloquence, nor language; but sorrow for sin, faith, and humility. It is the cry of distress,

the sense of want, the abasement of contrition, the energy of gratitude. It is not an elaborate string of well-arranged periods, nor an exercise of ingenuity, nor an effort of the memory; but the devout breathing of a soul struck with a sense of its own misery and of the infinite holiness of Him whom it is addressing; experimentally convinced of its own emptiness and of the abundant fulness of God. It is the complete renunciation of self, and entire dependence on another. It is the voice of the beggar who would be relieved; of the sinner who would be pardoned. It has nothing to offer but sin and sorrow; nothing to ask but forgiveness and acceptance; nothing to plead but the promises of the Gospel in the death of Christ. It never seeks to obtain its object by diminishing the guilt of sin, but by exalting the merits of the Saviour.

But as it is the effect of prayer to *expand* the affections as well as to *sanctify* them, the benevolent Christian is not satisfied to commend himself alone to the Divine favour. The heart which is full of the love of God, will overflow with love to its neighbour. All that are near to himself he wishes to bring near to God. He will present the whole human race as objects of the divine compassion, but especially the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Religion makes a man so liberal of soul, that he cannot endure to restrict any thing, much less Divine mercies, to himself: he therefore spiritualises the social affections, by adding inter-

cessory to personal prayer: for he knows, that petitioning for others is one of the best methods of exercising and enlarging our own love and charity, even if it were not to draw down those blessings which are promised to those for whom we ask them. It is unnecessary to produce any of the numberless instances with which Scripture abounds, on the efficacy of intercession: in which God has proved the truth of his own assurance, that "his ear was open to their cry." I shall confine myself to a few observations on the benefits it brings to him who offers it. — When we pray for the objects of our dearest regard, it purifies passion, and exalts love into religion: when we pray for those with whom we have worldly intercourse, it smooths down the swellings of envy, and bids the tumults of anger and ambition subside: when we pray for our country, it sanctifies patriotism: when we pray for those in authority, it adds a divine motive to human obedience: when we pray for our enemies, it softens the savageness of war, and mollifies hatred into tenderness, and resentment into sorrow. And we can only learn the duty so difficult to human nature, of forgiving those who have offended us, when we bring ourselves to pray for them to Him whom we ourselves daily offend. When those who are the faithful followers of the same Divine Master pray for each other, the reciprocal intercession delightfully realizes that beautiful idea of "the communion of saints." There is scarcely any thing which more

enriches the Christian than the circulation of this holy commerce; than the comfort of believing, while he is praying for his Christian friends, that he is also reaping the benefit of their prayers for him.

Some are for confining their intercessions only to the good, as if none but persons of merit were entitled to our prayers. Merit! who has it? Desert! who can plead it? in the sight of God, I mean. Who shall bring his own piety, or the piety of others, in the way of *claim*, before a Being of such transcendent holiness, that "the heavens are not clean in his sight?" And if we wait for perfect holiness as a preliminary to prayer, when shall such erring creatures pray *at all* to HIM "who chargeth the angels with folly?"

In closing this little work with the subject of intercessory prayer, may the Author be allowed to avail herself of the feeling it suggests to her own heart? And while she earnestly implores that Being, who can make the meanest of his creatures instrumental to his glory, to bless this humble attempt to those for whom it was written, may she, without presumption, entreat that this work of Christian charity may be reciprocal, and that those who peruse these pages may put up a petition for her, that in the great day to which we are all hastening, she may not be found to have suggested to others what she herself did not believe, or to have recommended what she did not desire

to practise! In that awful day of everlasting decision, may both the reader and the writer be pardoned and accepted, "not for any works of righteousness which they have done," but through the merits of the GREAT INTERCESSOR.

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